

Making Sense of



Mary

GARY G. MICHUTA

*More material from
Gary Michuta*

<http://www.HandsOnApologetics.com>

<http://www.GrottoPress.org>

Ecclesiastical approval granted by the Reverend Monsignor Robert J. McClory. Vicar General of Detroit, February 14, 2013.

Ecclesiastical approval confirms that a publication does not contain errors concerning the presentation of Catholic faith and morals. No implication is contained therein that the one granting the approval agrees with the contents, opinions or statements expressed.

Except where otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible^(c) Copyright (c) 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation (www.Lockman.org). Used with permission.

Deuterocanonical quotations in this book are taken from the New American Bible with Revised New Testament and Revised Psalms (c) 1991, 1986, 1970 confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC, and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition for use in the United States of America, copyright (c) 1994 and 1997, United States Catholic Conference – Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.

Cover Art: Nate Roberts

MAKING SENSE OF MARY (c) 2013 by Gary G. Michuta. All rights reserved Published by The Grotto Press Wixom, Michigan 877-247-6886 <http://www.GrottoPress.org>

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Michuta, Gary G., 1964–

Making Sense of Mary / Gary G. Michuta

Includes bibliographical references

ISBN 1-58188-013-8

978-1-58188-013-7

Contents

[*Acknowledgements*](#)

[*Introduction*](#)

[*Chapter 1 Principles and Assurances*](#)

[*Chapter 2 Eve and the Fall of Adam*](#)

[*Chapter 3 Perfect Plan of Redemption*](#)

[*Chapter 4 The First Gospel*](#)

[*Chapter 5 The Promised Sign*](#)

[*Chapter 6 Mother of the King*](#)

[*Chapter 7 Christ: Head and Body*](#)

[*Chapter 8 Mary and Daughter Zion*](#)

[*Chapter 9 Mary's Dual Maternity*](#)

[*Chapter 10 A Great Sign Appears in Heaven*](#)

[*Chapter 11 In the End*](#)

[*Appendix 1 Answering Common Objections*](#)

[*Appendix 2 Making Sense of Mary Ever-Virgin*](#)

[*Appendix 3 Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown on Jeremiah 31:22*](#)

[*Appendix 4 Making Sense of Mary: Virgin in Body and Spirit*](#)

Acknowledgements

I express my particular gratitude and appreciation to the following persons for their generous help and support during the research and writing of the book: Bob Salmon, John McAlpine, Rod Bennett, Susan Cumming, Victor Ajluni, Robert Corzine, Daniel Egan, Dr. Robert Fastiggi, Fr. Frank Kalabat, Timothy Staples, Cassandra and Paul Husak, Rev. Richard Futrell, Nate Roberts, Dave Sansoterra, Stephen Ray, Marcus Grodi, Roy Schoeman, William Albrecht, and especially my wife Christine and our children Paulina, Daniel, and Jennifer.

Introduction

Catholics love Mary. They paint beautiful pictures of her, make statues, and sing hymns about her. For them, the Roman Catholic Church's teachings on Mary are a source of joy. They love her.

Protestants generally do not share the same enthusiasm. For many Protestants, these doctrines are a source of conflict and confusion. Not only do Marian doctrines appear unbiblical, such as the doctrine of the Assumption (the teaching that Mary at the end of her early existence was taken body and soul into heaven), but they even seem to be anti-biblical: for example, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (the teaching that Mary was conceived without the stain of Original Sin) seems to contradict Scripture.

Another problem that Catholic believers' emphasis on Mary poses for Protestants is that Mary seems to receive an unjustifiable amount of attention when compared to the relatively few things that are written about her in Scripture. She only appears a few times in the New Testament and only a few of her words are recorded. Mary is more of a background figure in the New Testament, like John the Baptist. Marian doctrine seems to be, from a Protestant perspective, something of an add-on, or even a competitor against, the saving gospel of Christ.

Roman Catholic doctrine and devotion to Mary both seem too elevated from a non-Catholic perspective. She is made (so it appears) to be more than human, maybe even a goddess.

Marian doctrines are among the biggest obstacles for Protestants to overcome, usually the first doctrines to be attacked, and the last issues for converts to fully accept. As a convert to the Catholic Church once told me, the three biggest obstacles that he faced in regards to Catholicism were Mary, Mary, and Mary.

Why This Book

No doubt, there is plenty of sound apologetic material on Mary already available. Over the centuries, and especially within the last decade, several exceptionally skilled writers (including not a few converts to the Catholic Faith) have penned books defending Marian doctrine against Protestant contentions. These books range from scholarly works down to popular tracts and pamphlets. Besides printed works, there is abundant material available on the Internet defending Marian doctrine and answering objections. Why write another apologetic work on Mary?

The idea for writing Making Sense of Mary came to me one day when I was reading a book written by a staunch anti-Catholic Calvinist Protestant attacking Marian doctrine. The book was unpersuasive in a way that angered me. I felt that I had wasted my time. Unlike the other books that I have read that attacked Roman Catholic doctrine, this book

was different. It was self-serving. The author essentially argued that the Church's teachings on Mary are wrong because they are not Calvinistic, which, I'm sure, must have seemed like a slam-dunk apologetic for Calvinists readers, but it left me, the intended audience, cold. For me and others who do not share the same Calvinist presuppositions and/or broader Protestant presuppositions, the book was pointless.

Yet, I did receive one benefit from reading this book. It spurred me on to consider these fruitful questions: "Do Catholic apologists commit the same sin?" "Are we also guilty of arguing for the truthfulness of Marian doctrine by appealing our own Roman Catholic presuppositions?"

Don't misunderstand what I am trying to say. Catholic apologetic works on Mary, and I've read many of them over the years, are generally very good books. Most of them are rock solid, logically flawless, pre-eminently biblical, and well-grounded in history. But I wonder whether these works are as effective as they could be, or do they, like the Calvinist work, require the reader to adopt presuppositions that are not his own? It seems to me that some of these works may be guilty of doing just that. True, they have won many converts and helped clear up misunderstandings. However, they require the reader to have a good deal of sympathy for the Catholic position, which is a lot to expect from the typical non-Catholic reader. To avoid making such demands on the reader, a new approach is needed. My hope is that this book, and others to follow, will travel this new road in apologetics.

*What is this new road? I do not claim to have all the answers, but I think one avenue that should be explored in Catholic apologetics is to explain Catholic doctrine using a different set of presuppositions than those of our predecessors. The new shift doesn't mean that Catholic apologists should abandon the Faith they are defending or embrace presuppositions that they do not believe. For example, I'm not saying that we should adopt Calvinistic presuppositions, that are contrary to the Faith, to explain Catholicism to Calvinists. That would be as dishonest as it is illogical; how can one demonstrate the truth from false premises? The real solution is to start with areas of common ground that Roman Catholics and Protestants share and then build upon those areas. Here is the new road where *Making Sense of Mary* will travel.*

Making Sense of Mary is also different in that it will use, at times, common Protestant phraseology rather than standard Roman Catholic terminology. There are benefits and risks involved in this approach. Since all groups have their own set language and jargon, these terms and phrases are packed with meaning and function as shorthand for complex ideas. Yet, the danger always exists that nuances may be lost or equivocation may occur. Of course, these dangers are also present when standard Catholic terminology is used. It is my hope that the use of such phraseology will benefit non-Catholic readers and help them understand Marian doctrine in a general sense, so that when standard Catholic terminology is used, they will gain a better appreciation of the meaning of those terms.

There are many core principles and teachings that Catholics and nearly all Protestants share. We believe that God is transcendent and He rules over all of creation, that God alone is to be worshiped. We believe in the inspiration of Scripture, that the Old Testament prophesied about Jesus, and that Jesus Christ is the true God and true man, born of the Virgin Mary. We believe that Christ's saving work on the cross is perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing. We also believe that salvation can be found in no one else but Christ alone, just to name a few. To the Protestant mind, some of these core tenets may seem to contradict Catholic Marian doctrine. The goal of Making Sense of Mary is to show non-Catholics that these core principles are not an impediment to Marian doctrine; instead, Marian doctrine upholds and supports these core beliefs. Indeed, it is the denial of some Marian doctrine, I will argue, that ultimately undermines several of these core principles.

The two greatest fears that Protestants have concerning Mary is that Catholic believers raise her to the level of a goddess, or that Marian devotion detracts from the glory due to God. To navigate safely between these two extremes, Making Sense of Mary begins by drawing reasonable biblical boundary lines to prevent raising a creature to godhood or detracting from God's glory. Additionally, we will set three ground rules that will serve as the foundation for the book: Christ alone saves, God's plan of Redemption is perfect, complete, lacking in nothing, and that Satan's defeat in the Redemption is perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing. From these, we will show that these three ground rules can only be fully realized when Mary is given her proper place in the story of Redemption.

Unfortunately, most Christians have a diminished understanding of the Redemption and its biblical context. Part of the problem is that Christians go to the New Testament, almost exclusively, for their view of the Redemption. The problem with this approach is the same problem a math student runs into when he flips to the back of his math book for all his answers. He gets the correct answers, but he hasn't learned to work through the problems. The early Christians did have this problem. They had to work through the "problem" of the Fall to understand the Redemption. The first step to understanding Mary, therefore, is to understand the Fall. Once this is done, the Christian will begin to comprehend that the fullness of our Redemption is Christ.

The climax of the story of the Fall is God's promise of redemption in Genesis 3:15, as we will see later. In only a few lines God's word provides amazing detail about Christ and also his Mother. Genesis 3:15, also known as the First Gospel, reverberates throughout the Old Testament. Embedded within the First Gospel is the hope of Israel, the coming of the Messiah, which would be preceded by "the Woman" who would conceive and give birth to the promised male child. The New Testament applies this sign that our Redemption has come to Mary conceiving and bearing Christ. The Davidic kingdom takes this sign of Redemption and raises it to a higher level, where the promised Redeemer is unveiled as the Son of David, the Davidic Messiah King, and his mother is revealed as the

Queen Mother.

An order begins to appear. Christ is revealed, which, in turn, sheds light on Mary. Christ is the New Adam. Mary is the New Eve. Christ is the promised Redeemer, Mary is His promised mother, and His conception in Mary is the sign of His coming. Christ is the Son of David and Messiah King, Mary is His Queen Mother. A clearer understanding of Christ leads to a clearer understanding of Mary in God's plan.

Christ reveals something about Himself that affects how we understand the First Gospel and subsequent prophetic echoes already examined: the Church is the Body of Christ. This means that Mary gave birth to the one Christ, who is both Head and Body. This insight points to Mary's maternal relationship with Christ, in a sense, extending also the Church, which is His Body. Evidence of Mary's unique relationship is found not only in certain Daughter Zion prophecies, but also in the New Testament. All of these elements that begin in the first book of the Bible are found in the last book of the Bible in Revelation 12.

Like different pieces of a puzzle, each of these themes fits together to make a coherent biblical, Christ-centered, and Catholic understanding of Mary. They account for nearly all Marian doctrine as well as a few prominent Marian devotions.

For the Protestant reader, I hope that this introduction gives you a measure of comfort. I intend to write this book in harmony with the core beliefs and principles that we share. On this journey, we will take God's word seriously. We are going to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), as we examine what God's word says about Mary. This book is going to challenge you: it presumes that your love for Christ knows no boundaries and that you want to embrace the fullness of the faith to bring Christ greater glory, honor, and praise. If that describes you, I think you are going to like what you will read. We are going to build on our common core principles and with God's help make better sense of Mary's role in God's plan of redemption.

For the Catholic reader, Making Sense of Mary will prove beneficial as well. All too often Marian teaching is reduced to a series of propositions. We rarely see the larger context, the big picture, of how all these teachings fit together. As a result, Marian doctrine seems to be a superficial add-on or something abstract and ancillary to our Faith. The purpose of this book is to provide the reader with just such a context. I don't claim that this is the only way that Marian doctrine comes together, but I think this is a good biblical and patristic starting point.

Chapter 1 Principles and Assurances

Against Mariolatry

Anti-Marian sentiments run deep within Protestantism, breeding fear and suspicion about how Catholics view Mary. These sentiments had at one time become so prevalent that they had their own name: Mariolatry. Mariolatry suggests an extreme form of devotion to Mary. But the word itself means “Mary worship” (Mary-latria), just as idolatry means “Idol worship” (idol-latria).

The term Mariolatry isn’t used much anymore, but its error, that people somehow honor Mary so much that they make her into a goddess, lives on. In reaction to the perceived Mariolatry, some non-Catholic Christians have gone out of their way to honor Mary as little as possible. Others have even come to believe that speaking disparagingly about Mary is something good and honorable!

What non-Catholics often miss is that the Roman Catholic Church condemns Mariolatry. God is above all and over all. Nothing in creation, no matter how glorious or how exalted, is equal to God. Since God is outside of creation and over creation, He alone is to be worshiped (Deuteronomy 5:7, 6:13, 1 Kings 8:60, Isaiah 45:5, Matthew 4:10, etc.). [\[1\]](#) No Roman Catholic may worship anything in creation, since to do so would be to commit the sin of idolatry, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches:

"Idolatry not only refers to false pagan worship. It remains a constant temptation to faith. Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God. Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, Satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc....Idolatry rejects the unique Lordship of God; it is therefore incompatible with communion with God." [\[2\]](#)

Catholics and Protestants both reject and forbid the worship of anything or anyone other than God. This is part of our common core beliefs.

What about honor? Where should we draw the line between the honor that is due only to God and the honor given to anyone else? One solution is to honor God to the exclusion of everything else. At first glance, this seems like a worthy and pious position. But honoring God to the exclusion of all creatures gives less honor to God, not more.

Here’s another way to look at it. What do we have that we haven’t received (1 Corinthians 4:7)? If someone lives a holy Christian life, did he or she not receive that grace and sanctification from God? By honoring the person who received such a great gift of grace, we are also honoring God who bestowed such favor upon that person. Just as admiring and placing a beautiful painting in a place of honor redounds favorably to the artist who painted it, honoring God’s work of grace in people’s lives magnifies and

glorifies God who gave that grace. The opposite is also true. To use the analogy of the painter and the painting, not to admire a painter's works or not to give them a place of due honor doesn't honor the painter more, but less.

Honoring God to the exclusion of all else is also not biblical. Scripture approves and commands that we honor individuals as well (Mark 7:10, 10:19; Luke 18:20, Acts 28:10; Romans 2:7, 10, 12:10, 13:7; 1 Corinthians 12:23-26, Ephesians 6:2; 1 Timothy 5:3, 17, 6:1, 1 Peter 2:17, 3:7).

At its core, honor is an act of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for what He has given others for the benefit of all. In such cases, to honor another is to give honor to God, for the reason the person honored is ultimately to give praise, recognition, and thanksgiving to God, who made the person worthy of honor.

The question remains: Can excessive honor raise a creature to the level of a god or goddess? Is there a threshold where too much honor becomes idolatrous? If so, where is that line?

Creator / Creature Distinction

The question of excessive honor leading to idolatry assumes that there exists some proportionality between God and man, as if God were a highly exalted man, as Mormons believe. [3] God is not a creature, nor is He God because He is more exalted than what He has made. God is God by His very being and essence, as His name implies, "I AM WHO AM" (Exodus 3:14). So then, the difference between God and His creation is not a matter of degrees, but a matter of kind. God isn't a superior creature. [4] What God is -- is that He is. All creatures, indeed, all of creation, receive their existence from God who upholds them in being (Hebrews 1:3).

Comparing God with His creation is to compare the Creator to the created, the infinite to the finite, He Who Is to those who otherwise would not be. There is no more proportion between God and His creation than between a triangle and the taste of lemons. The perfect lemon taste is no more triangular than the most perfect triangle is any closer to tasting like a lemon. They can never be equal or even similar because they are two different kinds of things. The similarities between God and His creation are even less. [5]

Therefore, the most-exalted creature is no closer to becoming God, or a god, than the deepest blue is to becoming five pounds. Color and weight are two different kinds of things. God and man are also to different kinds of things. God is, in every respect, something other. Everything else is finite and dependent on God, from the highest and most exalted creature to the lowliest subatomic particle.

Our language sometimes trips us up in this respect. When a Christian says, "God is good," he or she does not mean that God is good in the sense that He is better than a worse thing. Rather, we mean to say that God is Goodness itself, the source of all that is good.

Similarly, God is not wise, but rather He is Wisdom. His creation is a mere finite reflection of that Wisdom. Likewise, God is not more holy than other things, but rather He is Holiness. God is above everything, God is not some sort of super-angelic being or an exalted man, He is above all because He is in a completely different order from all that He created. [\[6\]](#)

Since there is no proportionality between God and ourselves, there is no degree of exaltation that can raise a creature to Godhood. It's simply impossible! However, there is a line that we cannot cross. We cannot call a creature God since that would move a finite creature to the category of the infinite Creator.

The Jews were well aware of that important distinction. That's why they referred to God's name as being not sharable. [\[7\]](#)

The Arians and Honorific Titles

John Henry Newman came to the same conclusion while a decidedly anti-Catholic Protestant. Newman was an expert on an ancient Christian heresy known as Arianism. The Arians denied that Jesus is true God, consubstantial (of the same substance) with the Father. For the Arians, Jesus was not the God-Man, but a highly exalted creature made man. They exalted Jesus and gave Him honorific titles so great that no human would dare take for himself. They called Him, God's Logos or Word, the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, and the Firstborn of all creation. The Arians even said that the Son's nature was like that of the Father (Greek, homoiousia). Despite these remarkable and lofty titles, the Arians were roundly condemned as heretics because they refused to give Jesus the one title that bridges the infinite gap between Creator and created, God.

*We have modern-day Arians, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, who do the same. They confer many great and glorious honorific titles on Jesus calling Him the "exact representation of his [God's] very being." [\[8\]](#) They call Jesus "a mighty god" and "Divine." [\[9\]](#) They have even published a book on Jesus titled *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*. [\[10\]](#) Despite these lofty titles, which no human would dare accept, all Christians (Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox) condemn the Jehovah's Witnesses as heretics for the same reason as the Arians were condemned. They will not affirm Christ's full and true divinity by giving Him the incommunicable name of God.*

What does all this have to do with Mary? Catholics give Mary many great and glorious honorific titles. By doing so, many Protestant believe that Catholics are committing Mariolatry, that is making Mary into an idol or raising her by these titles to level of godhood.

As great and glorious as these honorific titles may be, they come nowhere near to the lofty and exalted titles the Arians (ancient and modern) give to Christ. She is never called "God's Word" or "the only-begotten daughter," nor is it said that she is of "like nature" to the Father, or anything like that.

Newman realized that if Catholics were to be condemned for raising Mary to the level of divinity by their use of honorific titles then Christians owe the Arians an apology, since the Arians gave even greater titles to Christ, yet they were condemned for not affirming Jesus as God. Only the incommunicable name of "God" will suffice.

Catholicism has never, and will never, call Mary—who is a mere creature—God or a goddess. In fact, there were little known heretics that sprang up in the fourth century called the Collyridians who offered sacrifices to Mary in divine worship. The Collyridians were condemned for idolatry and sent into exile in Arabia where they eventually disappeared.[\[11\]](#)

The Glory of God

What about the glory due to God? Doesn't honoring Mary, or any saint, detract from this glory? The question is based on the same error as the previous question. It assumes that there is some proportion between the finite and the infinite. Again, there is no proportionality. All the finite glory of the cosmos put together and magnified to the greatest degree would still fall infinitely short of God's infinite glory.

What then do we make of the Scriptures, which forbid giving glory and honor to anyone or anything other than God? For example, Isaiah wrote:

*"I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images"
(Isaiah 42:8).*

"For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another" (Isaiah 48:11).

Glory, like honorific titles, has its limit. Just as there is one honorific title that alone transcends the gulf between the creator and His creatures, namely the title God, there is the glory that God has in Himself that cannot be shared with any creature. In this regard, the incommunicable name of God and His Glory are almost interchangeable (see John 17:5-6). The passages quoted above from Isaiah, refer to God's name, which cannot be given to mere creatures.

No creature, no matter how exalted or glorious, possesses the infinite Glory of God.[\[12\]](#)
But when creatures are honored and given glory, no sane person would deliberately ascribe the infinite eternal Glory of God -- that He has in Himself as Himself -- to a creature. As long as we do not do this, we take nothing away from the glory due to God because there is no proportion between the finite and the infinite. Creatures are given finite and relative glory.

Scripture has no problem giving honor and glory to creation. Consider how the inspired authors of Scripture exalted the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is called, the city of God

(Psalms 46:4; 48:1), the city of the Lord (Isaiah 60:14), the city of the great king (Psalms 48:2; Matthew 5:35.), the city of righteousness (Isaiah 1:26), the city of truth (Zechariah 8:3), the holy city (Nehemiah 11:1, Isaiah 48:2, Matthew 4:5), the throne of the Lord (Jeremiah 3:17), Zion of the holy one of Israel (Isaiah 60:14), the all-beautiful city, and the joy of the whole earth (Psalms 48:1-3, Lamentations 2:15). Jerusalem is said to be “highly praised” (Psalms 48:1), and the abode of Justice and the holy hill (Jeremiah 31:23). Psalms 137:6 goes as far as to say, “May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth If I do not remember you, If I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy”^[13] Would any Christian accuse these inspired writers of detracting from the glory of God by exalting Jerusalem?^[14] Of course not. What then is going on?

Scripture exalts and honors Jerusalem because God has done great things for it. His Temple was in Jerusalem, and He sanctified the city with His presence. God has established the throne of the Davidic monarchy to last forever, the throne on which the Messiah will rule. God has made Jerusalem Zion, a foreshadowing of Heaven (Hebrews 12:22, Revelation 3:12, 21:2). Because of what God has done for Jerusalem, Scripture exalts and blesses the city (Jeremiah 31:23) in that it is the object of God’s love (Psalms 87:1-3).

What the word of God is showing us is that honoring members of God’s creation does not detract from His glory. Such honor is simply another way to honor God. Who today would consider that an award given to a new music CD would somehow detract from the glory or honor due to the singer on the CD? If anything, the award is public recognition of the singer as a singer. The honor given to the CD proclaims the singer’s magnificence. In the same way, a movie winning an award for Best Picture doesn’t detract from those who produced the movie. Instead, the award honors their talents by giving the movie public recognition.

When Catholics honor saints by calling them blessed, they are not detracting from God’s glory. Like the distinct glory and honor Scripture gives to Jerusalem, Catholics give distinct honor to Mary because, in some ways, she is like Jerusalem. As Mary once said, “the Mighty One has done great things for me. And holy is his Name (Luke 1:49).^[15] In many ways, praise of Mary echoes that praise Scripture gives to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the city of God (Psalms 46:4, 87:3, Hebrews 12:22). Catholics call Mary the “Mother of God” because she gave birth to the Word made flesh! Jerusalem is the holy city (Nehemiah 11:1, Isaiah 48:2, and Matthew 4:5). Catholics call Mary holy because the Word was made flesh and was tabernacled within her womb (John 1:14). Scripture praises Jerusalem for its beauty (Psalms 48:2, Lamentations 2:15). Mary is praised for her inner beauty and so on. The point is that the glory given to Mary is because God has done great things for her. Such honor does not compete with the glory due to God any more than Scripture’s praise of Jerusalem detracts from God’s glory.

In Luke 1:46, Mary says that her soul magnifies (exalts, makes great) the Lord. All generations will call Mary “blessed,” “for the Mighty One has done great things for me.

And Holy is his Name” (Luke 1:48-49). Notice that the glory bestowed upon Mary by all generations (i.e., calling her blessed) does not in any way infringe upon the incommunicable Glory and Name of God, rather, it magnifies it.

No Idolatry Allowed

Catholicism has no interest in idolatry other than to condemn it. Excessive honor of Mary, or of any saint, is just as distasteful to Catholics as it is to other Christians. However, there is a proper place for honoring God’s work in his saints, which should be given in proportion to what God has done in their lives. Since the greatest of all of God’s works is the Incarnation - the Word become flesh - that took place in Mary’s womb, Catholics honor Mary more than any other saint. [\[16\]](#)

Principles for this Book

Having laid down the biblical boundaries for honoring saints and drawing clear biblical lines that cannot be crossed without committing idolatry, I now propose some basic principles that will guide our discussion of Mary. These principles will serve a three-fold purpose. First, they will prevent us from asserting something about Mary that is contrary to, or that undermines, our core Christian beliefs about Christ and His work of Redemption. Second, they will provide us with added light and insight from which we may gain a better appreciation of God’s work through Mary. Third, these ground rules will help alleviate any fears the non-Catholic reader may have that our examination of Marian doctrine will somehow detract from Christ’s unique role as Savior and Lord, or call into question the sufficiency of Christ’s saving work. By explicitly affirming and adhering to these tenets, I wish to assure the reader that these core convictions will be honored.

The three principles or ground rules are:

Ground Rule #1 *Christ alone saves.*

Christ alone saves us. He alone accomplishes our redemption by His shed blood on the cross and His resurrection from the grave. Salvation is found in no one else but Christ (Acts 4:12). He alone has conquered sin and the devil (John 16:11, 33). God saves us by His grace and He must reign until all things are brought into subjection to Christ (Romans 6:12-13, 16:20, Ephesians 2:8-10, Hebrews 2:5-11, 14-15, 4:15, 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, 1 John 3:8).

This first ground rule is at the heart of both Protestant and Catholic theology, and it will be at the core and heart of this book as well. Roman Catholicism does not teach, nor will this book teach, that Mary (or anyone other than Christ) saves or is our savior. It will not teach that somehow Mary atones for sin or anything of that sort. On the contrary, our investigation will confirm the uniqueness of Christ as Savior and Lord and His preeminence above all in our salvation and redemption.

Ground Rule #2 *God's plan of redemption is perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing.*

Ground Rule #2 further describes the perfect saving work of Christ, which focuses on the form or context within which God carries out our Redemption in Christ. Not only is Christ's saving work perfect, but the broader context of how God brought about Christ's saving work is also absolutely perfect. This context will be called "God's perfect plan of redemption." God's plan perfectly repairs, restores, redeems, and establishes all that we lost in the Fall of Adam. There is no better way, no more perfect plan, no more perfect time or perfect manner in which the Father could have sent forth his Son to save and redeem us. [\[17\]](#) The third Ground Rule is a corollary of the second rule.

Ground Rule #3 *Satan's defeat in the Redemption is utterly perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing.*

Christ's victory is complete, and how God redeems us in Christ removes all the victories of evil that occurred in the Fall of Adam, which were passed on through Adam's offspring until the time of Christ (for example: disobedience, sin, punishment, death and corruption). All that was lost in Adam has been won back, redeemed, by Christ, Who conquered and despoiled the devil of all of his weapons.

When He [Christ] had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. [\[18\]](#)

Who are these rulers and authorities whom Christ disarmed and despoiled on the Cross? They are the devil and his angels. How perfectly did Christ triumph over these rulers? His triumph is full and perfect.

To use an image Christ used, He has tied up the strong man (that is, the Devil) plundering

him of his possessions (Matthew 12:28-29, Mark 3:27, Luke 11:21-22).

Ground Rule #3 is a corollary of the second rule. If God's plan of Redemption is perfect and flawlessly executed (Ground Rule #2), then it follows that Satan's defeat is perfect, complete, lacking in nothing (Ground Rule #3). Whatever gains Satan had achieved in the Fall were wiped out, cancelled, and won back. There remains nothing that the devil can boast about against God.

All three of these Ground Rules are at the heart of making sense of Mary. Without them, Catholic Marian doctrine would be difficult to understand. As we will see in the next few chapters, Marian doctrine not only fits within these three Ground Rules, but it accentuates and brings them to completion.

In Summary

** Roman Catholicism and Protestantism both condemn idolatry. The official Catechism of the Catholic Church, for example, condemns idolatry in all its forms.*

** The term "Mariolatry" refers to the belief that Catholics treat Mary as if she were a goddess.*

** The difference between God and all creatures is not a matter of degree, but of kind. God is infinite and uncreated. He can only be compared with created finite things by way of analogy.*

** Honorific titles describe degrees. Therefore, no honorific title can exalt any creature to the level of Divinity, no matter how great such a title may be. Only the incommunicable name of "God" can do this. This name cannot be given to any creature, including Mary.*

** The honor given to Creatures does not detract from God's Glory. The glory of all of God's creation falls infinitely short of the Glory that God has within Himself. Like honorific titles, God's Glory is a different kind of glory and not simply a greater degree of the glory that is given to creatures.*

** Glory and honor are given to creatures in proportion to what God has done for them. For example, Scripture ascribes honor and glory to the city of Jerusalem because God made it worthy of glory and honor by dwelling within it, making it a special object of His love.*

** Catholics honor the Virgin Mary because God has done great things for her.*

** These are the three basic rules for this book is: (1) Christ alone saves, (2) God's plan of redemption is perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing, and (3) Satan's defeat is perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing. When we apply these three rules to the biblical truth surrounding the Fall and Our Redemption, Catholic Marian doctrines will become more understandable.*

Chapter 2 Eve and the Fall of Adam

For many Christians, the Catholic view of Mary appears to be little more than a theological abstraction and an unnecessary add-on to the simple gospel of Christ. For many Protestants, Marian doctrine is at best peripheral to the story of our Redemption and relatively unimportant. Marian doctrine may even be viewed as a distraction that competes with the centrality of Christ's saving work.

Such was not the view of the early Christians. From early on, Christians understood Marian doctrine to be quite organic to the gospel. It appears effortlessly in their writings, as if they were the natural and logical conclusion to a very simple question. Furthermore, the highest and most lofty Marian doctrines appear first among these earliest Christian writings with more fundamental Marian doctrines appearing later on.

What accounts for this disparity? Why do Protestants have a hard time with Marian doctrine while the early Christians thought it was obvious and non-controversial? The answer may be found in the fact that Protestants and the early Christians came to understand the Redemption in two different ways.

To learn about Christ's saving work and our redemption, Protestants begin their investigation by focusing, almost exclusively, on the New Testament. The early Christians didn't do this. When they wished to understand the redemption, they first turned to the Old Testament, or better, they looked to the Old Testament through the interpretive lens of the New Testament. As a result, early Christians saw the Redemption in much greater detail than those who focus almost exclusively on the New Testament. In a sense, the "New Testament alone" approach is like learning about a novel by skipping the body of the work and reading only the concluding chapters. The main gist of the story is understood, but the background-story that is necessary to fully appreciate the conclusion is lost. In a similar way, early Christians gained a fuller understanding of the redemption, because they better understood from what we needed to be redeemed.

Consider Jesus' healing of the man born blind in John 9:1-38. Many of us are very familiar with this story. We probably learn it first at an early age in Sunday school or religious education, and, over the years, we've gained a deeper understanding of that miraculous healing. Yet, none of us can fully understand the miraculous nature as those who lived with the blind man. We didn't see the blind man's unfixed rolling eyes or see him grasping and touching his way down a street or in a room. We don't know what was wrong with his eyes. Was he blinded by a disease or did his eyes lack pupils? The more one grasps the exact nature and extent of the man's blindness, the better one can fully appreciate how miraculous this healing truly was. The same is true for the Redemption. We cannot fully appreciate the magnificence of the Redemption until we first grasp the exact nature and extent of the damage caused by the Fall. The better we understand the Fall of Adam, the better we will understand God's plan of redemption.

Need for Fresh Eyes

Doesn't every Christian know the story of the Fall of Adam? Yes, Christians know it very well, but this familiarity may be precisely the problem.

If you grew up in a Christian home, you probably learned about the Fall of Adam at an early age. During Sunday school or religious education class you may have even learned about the Fall in enjoyable ways through T.V. shows, flannel-graphs, and even hand puppets! As you grew older, you may have heard or read through the first three chapters of Genesis, not once, but many times.

The problem is that we Christians may be so familiar with the story of the Fall that our eyes glaze over and our minds plummet into a stupor when hearing about the Fall again. Yes, familiarity can breed contempt! It's a problem that we'll need to fight against if we are going to make sense of Mary. There are a lot of important details in the story of the Fall and we need to make a concerted effort to look at it with fresh eyes if we are going to recognize these details as the early Christians did. For only then can we more fully value the context of God's saving work in Christ and our redemption.

Our Approach

Let's look at the Fall beginning with the first chapter of Genesis. We will, of course, stick closely to the text and, whenever possible, we will use the New Testament as our guide on certain elements of the Fall. [\[19\]](#)

We also will consult the writings of the early Christians to see what details they found in the narrative. Some of these early Christian writers were disciples of the Apostles or were only a few generations removed from apostolic times. They deeply studied and meditated on the word of God and had a profound understanding of the Fall of Adam, our redemption, and the role of Mary. Early Christian insights will also help us understand the Fall in a way that is in line with the understanding of the ancient Church.

In the beginning...

The Bible begins with God, through His Word and Spirit, creating the heavens and the earth. In the first three days, God creates the realms of light, darkness, land, and sea (Genesis 1:3-13). God creates, in days four through six, the sun, moon, and the animals. On the sixth day, God creates man.

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth'" (Genesis 1:26).

Unlike the other creatures in the first chapter of Genesis, God did not speak man into being through His Word, but made him, forming him from the pure uncursed virgin earth and giving him a rational soul:

"Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).

There is a word play in the Hebrew. God made Adam (Hebrew, 'adam) from the earth (Hebrew, 'adamah).^[20] Adam received the breath of life and was made in God's own image and likeness. Adam's original condition was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). He was righteous, sinless, and pleasing to God, dwelling in God's presence (Genesis 3:8).^[21]

God charged Adam to "cultivate and keep" the garden. He also gave Adam the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:15-16). God warned, "In the day that you eat from it you will surely die." (Genesis 2:17).

Problem in Paradise

But there's a problem in Paradise. Adam is alone. Now, Adam's loneliness may not strike you as a terribly serious problem. How could Adam not be happy dwelling in God's presence in Paradise? God created Adam in His own "image and likeness." We know that God is not a solitary loner or a monad, but a community of Persons, the Trinity -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God created Adam to be in communion and companionship with another: "God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27).

Throughout Genesis, chapter 1, God repeatedly calls what He created "good" (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, and 25), culminating on the sixth day when He calls creation "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Adam's loneliness disrupts this pattern. God says:

"It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." (Genesis 2:18).^[22]

Yet God doesn't immediately take care of Adam's loneliness by creating the Woman. Instead, God presents all the animals of the field and air for Adam to name (Genesis 2:19-20). Why did God parade all these animals in front of Adam? Verse 20 suggests an answer:

"The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him."^[23]

God knew that none of the animals would satisfy Adam's need for a suitable helpmate, but Adam needed to find this out for Himself. After naming all the animals, Adam discovered that there was no helpmate among them "for him." The only truly satisfying helpmate for Adam had to be of his own nature, a rational creature of his own flesh and bone. Nothing less would suffice. We know this because when Adam first sees his newly created helpmate, he says to the Woman, "This is now bone of my bones..." as if Adam had found what he had been seeking.^[24]

The creation of the woman differs entirely from the creation of Adam and the rest of the

creatures of the earth. God did not call her into existence like the animals or take mud from the earth and breathe into her the breath of life. Rather, God created the woman directly from Adam.

"So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man" (Genesis 2:21-22).

Christians have long recognized a foreshadowing of the birth of the Church from Christ's side on the Cross in God's creation of Adam's bride from his side. For example, Adam was placed into a deep sleep near the Tree of Life in a Garden. Christ tasted the sleep of death while on a tree (Cross) near a garden when God created His Bride, the Church, from the blood and water that flowed from his side. [\[25\]](#)

Adam names his helpmate "Woman" because "she was taken out of man." We see God also highlight this through word play in the Hebrew text. She was called Woman (Hebrew, 'ishah) because she was taken out of man (Hebrew, ish).

All was right with the world. Adam with his wife both lived and delighted in God's presence.

The Order of Creation

God set up a certain order in creation. Adam is the origin of the human race, created out of inanimate matter. The Woman was created from Adam and all future generations will be the offspring of Adam through the Woman. Paul recognized this pattern when he wrote:

"For as the woman originates from ["out of"] the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God" (1 Corinthians 11:12).

God's order shows how man and woman complement each other. Adam is the origin of the human race and its head. The Woman is the crown of creation. How do we know this? We simply look at the order of creation: God created in an ascending order beginning with lesser inanimate matter to greater rational creatures. The last creature made by God is the Woman, who was not created directly from the dirt of the uncursed earth but from the pure and undefiled flesh and bone of a rational creature, Adam. Adam is superior to the Woman in regards to origin, but the woman is superior to Adam being the crown of creation. But everything, as Paul says, originates from God.

Two Covenants in Creation

At this point, two covenants or kinship bonds are present in Genesis. First, we find a vertical kinship bond between our first parents and God, since God created them in His "image and likeness" (Genesis 1:26). The phrase "image and likeness" describes a family

or kinship bond such as when Adam fathered his son Seth in his “image and likeness” (Genesis 5:3). The second covenant is the marriage covenant between Adam and the Woman. After God created the Woman from Adam’s side, Adam said that she is “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” The Genesis narrative adds:

For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

Jesus also references Genesis 2:24 as the original pattern or paradigm for marriage (Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-9). Likewise, Paul also describes this one-flesh unity this way:

"So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it..." (Ephesians 5:28-29).

If we want to be more precise, we can say that Adam and the Woman were betrothed to each other before God. Paul alludes to Adam and Eve being betrothed in 2 Corinthians 11:2-3 when He wrote: "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."

Paul “betrothed” the Corinthians to “one husband,” to present to Him as a “pure virgin,” whose fidelity is untainted and pure. But Paul fears that just as the serpent deceived another pure betrothed virgin (Adam’s helpmate), the Corinthians could also be “led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”

We do not hear much about betrothals today; they are not part of our culture. However, in Hebrew culture betrothals were essentially marriages. The betrothal took place when a man and a woman pledged their fidelity to each other. [26] The betrothed couple were considered married even though the marriage had yet to be consummated. Betrothal was so serious, in fact, that betrothed men were exempt from military service so that they might not break their pledge of fidelity (Deuteronomy 20:7). Breaking a betrothal required a bill of divorce to be issued, as was the case when Joseph considered breaking his betrothal to Mary when he found her to be with child (Matthew 1:19).

Covenant Representative

Each covenant needs a human representative. In Genesis 2, Adam is the representative for both covenants. [27] God gave him His covenant law (not to eat from the tree). It is important to note that God gave Adam this law before He created the Woman, and He never repeated it. How then did the Woman know God’s command so as to repeat it almost word for word to the Serpent? It’s possible that Genesis may have omitted God’s telling the Woman, but it is more likely that Adam, the covenant representative,

instructed her.

Paul seems to have understood the latter when he wrote:

"A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created and then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed."[\[28\]](#)

A woman (in our case, the Woman) is to receive instruction quietly in submissiveness, and must not exercise religious authority over a man (in our case, Adam). Paul's reasoning is that God created Adam first, then the Woman. What does the order of creation have to do with giving instruction, teaching, and exercising authority? It is this: Adam, being the origin of the human race and its covenantal representative, received the law. After God created the Woman, Adam was to teach the Woman about God's covenant. Based on the order of creation, therefore, the Woman was not in a position to teach or have authority over Adam, but the other way around. And this order, Paul teaches, applies also to the Church.

Faith and fidelity are at the core of both covenants in Genesis 2. The vertical covenant between God and our first parents required Adam and his wife to trust and believe that what God commanded was for their benefit and that they had to live in accord with that law. Faith and faithfulness were at the core of the horizontal marital covenant as well. Both needed to trust and be faithful for the true good of their spouse.

Genesis, chapter two, concludes by stating that Adam and the Woman were "naked and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25). Our first parents lived with full integrity and innocence, and they were pleasing in God's sight.[\[29\]](#)

Enter the Serpent

Chapter three begins with an ominous turn of events. A new character is introduced, the Serpent:

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made" (Genesis 3:1).

Who or what was this Serpent? We need not guess because we have the answer in the back of our Bible:

"And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world..." (Revelation 12:9)

"And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan..." (Revelation 20:2).

Why does Genesis describe the Devil as a serpent? There are a myriad of possible

reasons. The Devil could have possessed or controlled a real serpent. He could have manifested himself as a serpent. It is also possible that Genesis used a serpent as a symbol for the Devil. No matter what, we won't try to second-guess Scripture. We will simply leave it as Genesis and Revelation leave it, the Serpent is the Devil or Satan.

What does Genesis 3:1 mean when it describes the Serpent (the Devil) as being "craftier than any of the other beasts" in the garden? The Hebrew word translated as "craftier" (Hebrew, aruwm) is usually associated with someone who is plotting or scheming to do something. [30] For example, Job 5:12-13 tells us of God thwarting the plans of the cunning:

"He frustrates the plotting of the shrewd (Hebrew, 'aruwm), So that their hands cannot attain success. He captures the wise by their own shrewdness (Hebrew, 'aruwm), And the advice of the cunning is quickly thwarted." [31]

Job 15:5 also uses the same Hebrew word to describe someone who carefully selects his words to cloak the plans of the wicked:

"For your guilt teaches your mouth, And you choose the language of the crafty [arumiym]."

Proverbs 12:23 uses the same word to describe a man who masks knowledge for his own advantage:

"A shrewd [arum] man conceals his knowledge, but the hearts of fools gush forth folly."

Yet, calculation and deliberation aren't immoral in themselves. Our Lord told His disciples that they were to say nothing until the Holy Spirit gave them the words to speak at the proper time. He advised them to be as "shrewd as serpents and simple as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

The "crafty" serpent is calculating, plotting, scheming, and secretive. The idea of a scheming serpent is used later in Genesis when Jacob spoke of his son Dan:

"Dan shall be a serpent in the way, A horned snake in the path, That bites the horse's heels, So that his rider falls backward" (Genesis 49:17).

Jacob's blessing shows us the shrewdness or the calculating craftiness of a serpent. [32] The serpent wants to attack the rider, but a direct strike would not give the serpent any extra advantage. Instead, the serpent waits along a horse path. When the rider comes, it strikes, not at the rider, but at the horse's heels. The horse panics and throws the rider to the ground, making him easy prey for the serpent's final deadly attack.

The Serpent's appearance as the craftiest of God's creatures evokes an image of the serpent in Jacob's blessing. If the serpent was the craftiest animal, we have an inkling of what the Serpent was doing before he appeared in Genesis 3:1. He was hiding, watching,

plotting, scheming, and waiting for an opportunity to strike.

Who is the Target?

Why did the Serpent (that is the Devil) wish to attack anything in Paradise? The first two chapters of Genesis concern God's creation, and particularly the creation of Adam and the Woman. Perhaps God's original design somehow provoked the Devil to act? The Jews around the time of Jesus believed that the Devil's rebellion was fueled by envy:

"For God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him. But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who are in his possession experience it."[\[33\]](#)

What did the Devil envy? Was he envious of God's creation? Was he envious of God's covenantal relationship with man? Was he envious that human beings were to have dominion to rule over the works of God's hands (Genesis 1:26, 28)? As Psalms 8:4-8 says:

"What is man that You thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, All sheep and oxen, And also the beast of the field-The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas."

Did the Devil know about the Incarnation, that God would become flesh and live among us, and that everything is to be under His dominion (Hebrews 2:6-8)? We don't know.

We do know that, in his envy, the Devil introduced death into the world in two ways. First, the Serpent brought about the spiritual death of our first parents. God told Adam, "...the day you eat of it [the forbidden fruit] you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17, 3:3). But Adam did not physically die after eating the fruit. The death mentioned here was spiritual death. Second, it was through Adam's sin that he lost the chance for immortality and through that loss, we all die (Romans 5:12).

Envy and death seems to be a common trait of the Evil One. Scripture is filled with examples of how envy leads to death and murder. For example, in the New Testament, Jesus was handed over to Pilate because of envy:

"For he [Pilate] knew that because of envy they [the wicked] had handed Him over."[\[34\]](#)

Those who did so were simply following in the footsteps of their spiritual father, the Devil:

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him."[\[35\]](#)

For Christ, the New Adam, the Devil used envy to bring about His death on the Cross. For the first Adam, the Devil out of envy introduced sin and death into Paradise. [\[36\]](#)

Envy wishes to possess or take away whatever another possesses. How would a shrewd demonic Serpent go about satisfying his envy for what God has created? How will he bring about the destruction of what we have seen so far in Genesis?

Target: Adam

The two covenants in Genesis 2 (between God and our first parents and their marriage covenant) are at the heart of God's creation. If the Serpent wishes to destroy God's original design, he must destroy both of these covenants. But how could he pull off such a feat?

Adam is the obvious primary target. He is the origin of the human race and the covenantal representative of both covenants. If the Devil could get Adam to turn against God by sinning, all of humanity would fall with him, as Paul wrote:

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned..." [\[37\]](#)

When Paul says "through one man" sin entered the world, he means that Adam's sin alone accomplished the Fall. The Apostle's words rule out the possibility that the Woman's sin could have produced the same effect. As Thomas Aquinas wrote, commenting on this passage:

"Now if the woman would have transmitted original sin to her children, he [Paul] should have said that it [sin] entered by two, since both of them sinned, or rather that it entered by a woman, since she sinned first." [\[38\]](#)

Adam is the origin of both the Woman and his progeny (the human race). Humanity would not fall unless it was poisoned, infected, and ruined, at its root through its representative head. [\[39\]](#) The same cannot be said about the Woman. If she alone sinned, God could repair the damage without destroying His original design. For example, God could have cast the Woman out of paradise, and after she died, He could have created for Adam another helpmate who would remain faithful.

Adam's sin was different. When Adam sinned the original design was toppled. Creating another Adam from the ground would be to start a new human race. Only Adam's fall would distort or seem to destroy God's original design and order so that it would not be immediately repaired. A New Adam and a new creation would be needed to restore all things.

Being the representative head of both covenants, Adam's sin would break both covenants. He would have turned his back on God and he would have stopped willing the

good of his wife. [\[40\]](#) That's why the Serpent's primary target was Adam. If he could get Adam to sin against God, victory was his!

The Serpent's Diabolical Plan

The Serpent had one distinct advantage over our first parents, stealth. They didn't know him and what he intended to do. [\[41\]](#) The Serpent had one--and only one--chance to bring down Adam without losing the advantage. If he failed anywhere along the way, his true intent would be unmasked. The Serpent, therefore, shrewdly devised a plan whereby he could leverage every possible advantage to ensure that his one shot had the greatest possibility of success.

The Serpent Approaches the Woman

If Adam was the Serpent's primary target, why didn't he approach Adam first? Tempting Adam directly wouldn't have given the Serpent any special advantage. Instead, he approaches the Woman. What advantage did the Serpent gain by approaching the Woman before Adam?

He didn't approach the Woman because she was more trusting, or more gullible than Adam, or because she was somehow "the weaker sex." Adam and the Woman were both made in the image and likeness of God. They were of the same flesh and bone. She was the crown of Creation. The Serpent approached the Woman first because he saw an opportunity that he could exploit.

We learned earlier in chapter 2 that it was "not good" for Adam to be alone (Genesis 2:18). The Serpent would have known this, since he must have seen Adam naming all the animals without finding a suitable helpmate among them (Genesis 2:19-20). Only the Woman would suffice.

The Serpent's craftiness, by first approaching the Woman, becomes immediately apparent. If the Serpent recruited the Woman to his cause, both of them could approach Adam and entice him to join their rebellion against God. Adam would then face a difficult dilemma; he could either join the Woman and the Serpent in rebellion--or refuse to join and once again be alone without a helpmate. Since Adam already knew that being alone was not good, the alternative to join the rebellion became all the more attractive.

As Augustine once noted:

"...[The Devil] first tried his deceit upon the woman, making his assault upon the weaker part of that human alliance, that he might gradually gain the whole...that he [Adam] might yield to the error of the woman...so we cannot believe that Adam was deceived, and supposed the devil's word to be truth, and therefore transgressed God's law, but that he by the drawings of kindred yielded to the woman, the husband to the wife, the one human being to the only other human being...because the woman accepted as true what

the serpent told her, but the man could not bear to be severed from his only companion, even though this involved a partnership in sin. He was not on this account less culpable, but sinned with his eyes open."[\[42\]](#)

Just as the serpent in Jacob's blessing of Dan did not strike the rider directly, but the horse he was riding on, in order to gain the advantage (Genesis 49:17), the Serpent of Genesis did not strike Adam directly. He first tempts the helpmate, hoping to gain the advantage over his primary target, Adam.

Added Confirmation

Adam's response to God confirms Augustine's point. When asked why he ate the forbidden fruit, Adam replied:

"The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate" (Genesis 3:12).[\[43\]](#)

Often, we dismiss Adam's words as childish finger-pointing in order to avoid admitting guilt, but could Adam, with such an intimate and immediate knowledge of God, honestly have believed that he could pull the proverbial wool over the eyes of the Almighty? God knows the thoughts of the heart.[\[44\]](#) *Adam was sinful, he wasn't stupid.*

Some suggest that Adam was blaming God for his fall by saying, "the Woman you gave to be with me...". How could Adam possibly blame the all-holy, all-powerful, all-loving, merciful God for his sin? If such an idea was at work here, it was merely secondary.

The most realistic choice is to take Adam at his word. When asked why he rebelled, Adam answered by underscoring the real power behind his decision. It was the Woman, his God-given helpmate, who urged him to sin. After all, it was not good for man to be alone, so he followed his helpmate and ate of the fruit.

God's response to Adam also underscores what Augustine had pointed out. God did not say to Adam, "Because you alone sinned and tried to blame your wife...". Rather, God's condemnation of Adam shows a tacit recognition of the Woman's role in his fall:

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'" (Genesis 3:17).[\[45\]](#)

Because Adam listened to his wife and not God's command, he was condemned. God's words highlight the instrumentality of the Woman in the Serpent's plan. She became his instrument.

The Serpent Seduces the Woman with the Lie

The Devil approached the Woman with a lie. As we saw earlier in 2 Corinthians 11:2-3, "...the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness" and her mind "was led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion" to her husband. The early Christians also saw the

Woman's temptation as a spiritual seduction. The Serpent enticed the Woman to be unfaithful both to God and her husband.

We mentioned earlier that at the heart of both covenants in Genesis 2 is trust and faithfulness. The Serpent's lie zeroes in directly on the Woman's faith and faithfulness. The Woman had learned of God's command not to eat of the tree from her spouse, Adam. But the Devil calls God's words to Adam into question:

"You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5).

With one stroke, the Serpent sows the seed of doubt in the Woman. Is God honestly looking out for your best interest? Is He really caring about you, or is He withholding an even greater blessing from you? The Serpent also questions Adam's competence as the covenant representative. Did Adam fully grasp Who God is? Did Adam know the true motive behind God's command? The Woman wasn't privy to such information since she was not present when God spoke to Adam. Could it perhaps be that Adam wasn't telling her the whole story? The early Christian writer, Irenaeus of Lyons, described it this way:

"But the woman, having heard of the command from Adam, treated it with contempt, either because she deemed it unworthy of God to speak by means of it, or because she had her doubts, perhaps even held the opinion that the command was given to her by Adam of his own accord."[\[46\]](#)

It is intriguing how this first temptation to sin becomes a prototype for all future temptations. The Epistle of James describes temptation and its effects in a way that is eerily similar to what took place in Genesis:

"...But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" (James 1:14-15).

The Serpent enticed the Woman with a yearning to be like God. Carried away and enticed by her lusts, she conceives the Serpent's words in her heart, accepts it, and through her actions gives birth to sin by being the instrument through which Adam will eventually sin. When the sin is accomplished (and takes root) in Adam, the Woman will then bear children who are subject to death, both spiritually and physically.[\[47\]](#)

The Woman Changes Alliances

The Woman was deceived. Paul writes about this and its deeper implications:

"And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression."[\[48\]](#)

The Woman was deceived and transgressed. When Paul wrote that the Woman

transgressed, he surely meant that she was guilty of transgression, which is a common belief among Christians. But there is more in Paul's words. Let's unpack them.

If the Woman was deceived into believing that God did not forbid eating the fruit, would she still be culpably guilty of her actions? In other words, wouldn't her deception make her subjectively innocent even though her actions were objectively sinful? For example, what if someone were hypnotized, and through the power of suggestion, believed that a loaded gun was not real, but instead a toy. If that deceived person played with it and killed someone, is he guilty of murder? Objectively speaking, yes. But subjectively speaking, he would not be guilty or culpable of murder unless he knew before hand what would take place. We see this distinction in civil law. A difference exists between murder and manslaughter. Deception lessens personal guilt or culpability.

Here then is the problem: Paul says the Woman was deceived and transgressed (i.e. became a sinner). How can both be true?

The early Christian writer, Severianus of Syria, gives us a keen insight into the real nature of the woman's deception:

"Because you [Serpent] deceived [the Woman] by a simulated friendship, you will be cast out as an enemy." [\[49\]](#)

According to Severianus (and others as well), the Serpent deceived the Woman into believing that he was her friend. [\[50\]](#) So the root of the Woman's deception was misplaced faith. Who was looking out for her welfare and her highest good? Who was her true friend? Was it God, as Adam had told her, or was it the Serpent?

The Woman, being deceived into thinking the Serpent was her friend, believed his lie, and sinned against God:

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate..." (Genesis 3:6).

She had broken the faith and faithfulness that had bound her to God and to her husband. Being led astray from the "simplicity and purity" of devotion to her husband, she acted against the covenant law that he had given her. Instead, the Woman believed the words of her new friend, the Serpent. [\[51\]](#) Now she was no longer God's friend and living in accord with His will, but she was now the Serpent's friend, joining him in rebellion against God.

Friendship / Enmity

When it comes to choosing between God and the Devil, there is no gray area. Our Lord said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other..." (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13). Paul

also writes that there is no fellowship between light and darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14). The Woman effectively changed her loyalty and became the Serpent's ally.

God had created Adam and the Woman, immaculate, innocent, without sin, and fully righteous. Like righteous Abraham, they were friends of God.[\[52\]](#) The Woman's sin (and later Adam's sin) broke that friendship – and alliance. By sinning, she had lost her righteousness. Her friendship with the Devil had made her an enemy of God. As James' tells the sinners of his day:

"You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."[\[53\]](#)

Friendship with the world means friendship with "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31, 16:11). By becoming friends with the Serpent (the Devil) and following him in rebellion, the Woman became God's enemy.

The Serpent's Instrument

Had the Serpent's plan succeeded only up to this point, it would have been a dismal failure. Yes, he had won a series of victories. He had approached the Woman and had told her the lie. He had deceived her with false friendship. She had sinned and had allied herself with him. She had rebelled against God and her friendship with God had turned into enmity. But all these victories had achieved nothing if they had not yet brought about the Serpent's goal, Adam's sin and the fall of humanity.

For the Serpent's plan to succeed, the Woman must cooperate with the devil's plan until the end, by offering to get Adam to eat the fruit, and that is precisely what the Woman does. She becomes the Serpent's instrument in bringing about the Fall.

The Book of Sirach, which was written around BC 250, points to the Woman's instrumentality in the Fall in this way:

"In woman was sin's beginning, and because of her we all die."[\[54\]](#)

Sirach is not saying that the Woman's sin accomplished the Fall of mankind. Rather, he is only echoing God's words to Adam after he had sinned, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and ate..." (Genesis 3:17). The Woman was the first to sin and because she cooperated in the Serpent's plan, Adam sinned and brought about death, both spiritually and physically, to himself and his wife as well as their offspring.[\[55\]](#)

The Woman's cooperation is the last irreducible step left for the Serpent to achieve his final goal. The early Christian writers were quite explicit about the Woman's cooperation and instrumentality in the Fall:

"Does he [The Devil] not ask repeatedly: 'How does it happen that the instrument which

aided me in the beginning is now my enemy? Woman cooperated with me to obtain tyrannical power over the human race..."[56]

Theophilus of Antioch wrote:

"...[T]his Eve was deceived of old by the Serpent, and became the author of sin...."[57]

Tertullian wrote a powerful indictment against the Woman for her cooperation with the Devil's plan:

"You [Eve] are the devil's gateway: you are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die."[58]

The Woman was the "devil's gateway," "the unsealer of the tree," the "first deserter," she succeeded where the Devil feared to attack, she was the one who "destroyed" Adam. Because of her actions, Adam was led to sin and brought death to the world.

Adam is "the Peccator" (Latin for 'Sinner') whose sin brought about the loss of grace for his descendents. By offering the fruit to Adam, the Woman became the "Co-peccatrix" (Latin for "she who is with the Sinner") of the Fall. It is through the instrumentality of the Co-peccatrix that the Peccator accomplished the fall of the human race.

But changing alliances from God to the Serpent wasn't enough. She also had to freely cooperate in that alliance to offer her betrothed husband the fruit, and this she did. That is why Sirach said, "In woman was sin's beginning, and because of her we all die."

The Fall of Adam Accomplished

There stood Adam. His helpmate allied in a common cause with the Serpent against God. She offered her betrothed the fruit and a chance to follow her in rebellion. Adam is once again alone. Should he remain faithful to God and remain apart and estranged from his helpmate or follow his helpmate and the Serpent?

Adam listened to the voice of his wife and ate the fruit. [59] Adam had changed alliances and broken God's covenant. Like the Woman, Adam lost his righteousness and sinless friendship with God. He had become an ally of the Serpent and was at enmity with God. He had broken faith.

The marriage covenant was also harmed. Adam and his wife were no longer oriented completely towards the good of the other, in accord with God's plan, but they had become re-oriented towards their own individual good.

God Comes In Judgment

Immediately after Adam and the Woman's eyes are opened, God comes to Paradise and

asks Adam why he had sinned. Adam blames his wife for instigating his sinful behavior:

"The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate" (Genesis 3:12).

God calls the Woman to account for her actions:

"Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'" (Genesis 3:13).

What was God referring to when he asked "What is this you have done?" What does "this" refer to? It refers to everything that has transpired beforehand, namely, the Woman befriending the Serpent, believing his lie, cooperating with the Serpent's plan by offering the fruit to her husband, Adam's sin, and the loss of innocence. The Woman replied: "...The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Genesis 3:13).

The Serpent, no doubt basking in his malevolent glory at the victories he had won, remained silent. Finding all parties guilty, God handed down His judgment in the form of three separate curses.

Three Curses

The first to be cursed was the Serpent (the Devil), the architect of the Fall (Genesis 3:14-15). The second cursed was to the Woman, the Serpent's willing accomplice (Genesis 3:16). The third cursed was Adam, whose transgression alone brought about the condemnation and spiritual death to all mankind (Genesis 3:17-19).

Adam's condemnation concludes with the following ominous words:

"Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall returns" (Genesis 3:19).

"Adam's days on earth are now numbered. On the day that Adam and his wife ate of the fruit, they died spiritually, and the fruit of their disobedience was physical death as well."
[\[60\]](#)

God had warned that, "[T]he day that you eat from it [the tree of knowledge] you will surely die."[\[61\]](#) *But Adam and Eve didn't immediately die, at least not physically. God had mercy on them and on us. God prophesied that whatever victories the Serpent had temporarily achieved. He would win back through a promised Seed that would crush the head of the Serpent (Genesis 3:15). This is the Protoevangelium or the "First Gospel" or "First Good News," since it is the first prophecy of Christ in Scripture.*

God also did not directly curse Adam and Eve, as Irenaeus of Lyons explains:

"He pronounced no curse against Adam personally, but against the ground, in reference to his works, as a certain person among the ancients has observed: 'God did indeed transfer the curse to the earth that it might not remain in man.' But man received, as the

punishment of his transgression, the toilsome task of tilling the earth, and to eat bread in the sweat of his face, and to return to the dust from whence he was taken. Similarly also did the woman [received] toil, and labour, and groans, and the pangs of parturition, and a state of subjection, that is, that she should serve her husband; so that they should neither perish altogether when cursed by God, nor, by remaining unrebuked, should be led to despise God."[\[62\]](#)

According to Irenaeus, God did not curse our first parents directly because they would have perished along with all their future progeny. Instead, God cursed the circumstances in which they lived so that our future redemption in Christ would be possible. "Therefore He [God] did not actually curse Adam and Eve," writes Tertullian, "for they were candidates for restoration..."[\[63\]](#)

The Fall Accomplished, Consequences Applied

The Serpent's plan worked flawlessly. He was able to approach the Woman, deceive her into believing he was her friend, successfully entice her to sin and to cooperate in the rebellion by offering the fruit to Adam. Adam sinned and the fall was accomplished.

But the Devil's string of achievements didn't end there. After the Fall, Adam and the Woman would continue to contribute to the Devil's plan until it reached its completion. Like a row of falling dominos, the consequences of Adam's sin and the rebellion inevitably unfolded one after the other. Adam and the Woman received in their persons the reward for their disobedience, reaping what they sowed. The consequences of Adam's sin are applied to humanity through childbirth. Instead of being fruitful, multiplying, and filling the earth with righteous children, the fallen children of Adam extend the Serpent's dominion over the earth.

Personal Consequences

What were the personal consequences for Adam and the Woman's sin?

Loss of Glory

There Adam and his wife had once been righteous and glorious (Psalms 8:5-8, 1 Corinthians 11:7); they were now reduced to disgrace and lived in ignominy.[\[64\]](#) *Where they had once walked naked and unashamed, now God covered their bodies with animal skins (Genesis 3:21).*

Exile from Paradise

The next inevitable consequence of the Fall was exile from Paradise. Genesis continues:

"Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever' -- therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to

cultivate the ground from which he was taken. He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3:22-24).

In order to prevent Adam's sin from becoming a permanent state, God cast Adam out of Paradise and barred him from eating from the tree of life, so that he would not live forever.

Loss of Immortality

Exiled from Paradise and separated from the tree of life, the days of Adam and his wife were now numbered. He was created from the dust of the earth and there he is to return. Genesis 5:5 marks out the common fate of his children: Adam died.

A Woman by Another Name

In Genesis 2:23, Adam's wife was called Woman (Hebrew, ishah) because she came from man (Hebrew, ish). After the Fall Adam gives the Woman a new name:

"Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living" (Genesis 3:20). [\[65\]](#)

The timing of Adam's wife's new name is somewhat jarring. The occasion has led some commentators to suggest that this verse is out of place and that it better fits at the end of the Chapter 3 rather than immediately following Adam's curse. [\[66\]](#) The early Christian writer Epiphanius of Salamis wrote:

"For Eve was called 'mother of the living' in that passage, and this after being told, 'Earth thou art and unto Earth shall thou return,' following her transgression. And after this transgression, it was a surprise that she received this great title. Physically speaking, every human being in the world is born of that Eve." [\[67\]](#)

From a Christian perspective, Eve is anything but the "mother of all the living." Her sinful actions ultimately brought about that terrible sentence, "Earth thou art and unto Earth shall thou return" to Adam, herself, and her children. Moreover, she is the mother of the living only in a physical sense because all of her children are born estranged from God, as it were, spiritually dead. [\[68\]](#) Epiphanius' solution to this problem was to understand the new name as a prophecy of a New Eve, who will be the mother of all the living. [\[69\]](#)

Change in Dominion

The consequences of Adam's sin were not restricted to our first parents, but they affect his progeny throughout time.

In the beginning, God blessed Adam and his wife to be fruitful and multiply and to have dominion or rule over the earth: [\[70\]](#)

"God blessed them [Adam and his wife]; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" [\[71\]](#)

It is a royal function to subdue and rule over something or someone. How were Adam and the Woman to rule or have dominion over the earth? It was to be through their children. Being fruitful and multiplying, they were to populate the earth with righteous offspring. Indeed, had they not sinned, they may have been given the right to eat from the tree of life and live forever. This would mean that they might live to see the day when their dominion spread to the ends of the earth through their children.

However, this dominion was lost. No longer did Adam and his wife bear righteous children, but "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). Sin and death reigned. [\[72\]](#) The Devil had become the ruler of this world (John 12:31). No longer would the world be filled with the righteous doing God's will, but it would be filled with "slaves of sin" (Romans 6:17, 20) who would be entrapped and held captive by the Devil "to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:26).

Conclusion

The Serpent's shrewdness is seen in his remarkably brilliant and flawlessly executed malevolent plan. Each step in his plan was irreducible and set in motion the following step. Had any step along the way failed, the entire plan would have collapsed and the Serpent would have failed.

Had the Serpent not gained an audience with the Woman, the plan would have never started. Had he been unable to persuade her of his good intentions, she would not have accepted his lie. Had the Woman not believed his lie, she would not have cooperated with him. If the Woman had sinned, but had not fully cooperated with the Serpent's plan, she alone would have fallen and humanity at its root would have remained in God's favor. If the Woman had cooperated with the Devil's plan, but Adam had refused to "listen to the voice" of his wife, only the woman would have fallen and little would have been gained. The Fall, indeed, is comprised of many steps, each step opening the possibility of the next step until the whole was accomplished.

Once, however, the Fall was accomplished, a string of consequences was set in motion. Our first parents lost their original innocence, righteousness, and glory. They were exiled from Paradise, and, now separated from the tree of life, became mortal. The dominion that they would have enjoyed through their marital fruitfulness had been co-opted and changed. Instead spreading God's dominion through righteous children, they became slaves to sin and death. A new ruler of the world had taken over.

Like an expert billiard player who uses each shot to set up the next, the Devil "ran the table." One victory after the next, he accomplished what he had set out to do, culminating in a fallen world under his dominion.

However, whatever victories the Devil had won in the beginning were only temporary. Our merciful God, before pronouncing judgment upon our first parents, drove a dagger through the prideful heart of the Serpent by prophesying that the current situation would not stand. God would reverse the fortunes of the Devil and He would bring about a promised “seed” who would crush the Serpent’s head (cf. Genesis 3:15).

In Summary

** Just as a miraculous healing can only be fully appreciated by knowing the exact nature and extent of the ailment, our Redemption can only be fully appreciated by understanding the exact nature and extent of the damage brought about by the Fall.*

** God’s order of creation begins with inanimate matter and culminates in the creation of rational beings.*

** Adam was formed from the uncursed earth and created to be in communion with another of the same flesh and bone. Since it was not good for man to be alone, God put Adam into a deep sleep and created a helpmate from his side. The flesh and bone relationship between Adam and the Woman mirrors that of marriage (Genesis 2:23, Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-9). They were betrothed virgins without sin or shame (2 Corinthians 11:2-3).*

** Two covenants are present in Genesis 1-2, a vertical covenant between God and Adam and his Helpmate and a horizontal marital covenant between Adam and the Woman. Adam was the covenantal representative of both. These covenants were rooted in faith and trust.*

** The Serpent is the most crafty or shrewd of all the other animals of Paradise. The word for crafty or shrewd (‘aruwm) describes someone who is calculating, cunning, and scheming.*

** The Serpent, envious of God’s creation, sought to destroy it through a malevolent plan. His target was Adam, the covenantal head of both covenants. The Serpent did not approach Adam directly, but first won over Adam’s helpmate, the Woman, seduced her into a false friendship, and obtained her willing cooperation in the rebellion. She offered her husband the forbidden fruit. Adam ate and sinned.*

** The Fall can be divided into the Fall Accomplished and the Fall Applied.*

** The Fall was accomplished by the sin of Adam alone. Through Adam’s disobedience, the many were made sinners or unrighteous. The Woman, by cooperating with the Serpent’s plan, provided the circumstances for the Fall to occur.*

** The Fall is applied first in the persons of Adam and the Woman. They received the just, yet merciful, punishment for their disobedience. They lost their original glory, innocence, their original justice or righteousness, they were driven out of Paradise, and they lost*

access to the Tree of Life, thereby losing the chance for immortality. They were both now subject to death. The Fall is also applied to Adam's fallen offspring. God had commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over the earth. As a consequence of the Fall, the Serpent (the Devil) won a great victory in that he was able to extend his dominion over the earth through Adam's fallen children.

** The Serpent's actions in the Fall consisted of a series of irreducible steps. If he failed to achieve even one of these steps, his entire plan would have failed: Adam would not have fallen and God's original design would have remained intact. But the Serpent did succeeded in running the table, moving step by step until all was accomplished.*

** Whatever victories the Serpent (the Devil) had accomplished in the Fall were only temporary. God promised in Genesis that He would not allow this arrangement to stand and that He would bring about a promised "Seed" who would crush the head of the Serpent (Genesis 3:15).*

Chapter 3 Perfect Plan of Redemption

The two previous chapters of this book supplied us with what we needed to more fully appreciate and understand the scope of God's plan of redemption. In Chapter 1, we proposed the following ground rules to guide us in our search to understand more about Mary.

**** Christ alone saves.***

**** God's plan of redemption is perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing.***

**** Satan's defeat is also perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing.***

These ground rules will continue to provide the foundation on which we will build a deeper understanding of redemption.

In Chapter 2, we noted that a miraculous healing is most fully appreciated when the nature and extent of the wound that was healed is known and understood. We then examined the nature and extent of the Fall, how it came about, and its continuing effects.

We discovered that Adam's fall was not a one-act play, but contained multiple acts. The Serpent (the Devil) could only have carried out his ultimate (although temporary) victory, the fall of the human race through the sin of Adam, through a series of smaller victories.

Once Adam sinned, the consequences of his sin befell our first parents. They lost their innocence, glory, righteousness, Paradise, immortality, and dominion over the earth. The consequences of Adam's fall were applied throughout history to his children as well. Humanity was born in a state of unrighteousness, and was subject to sin, death, and the Devil.

Keeping our three ground rules in mind, and knowing the nature and extent of the wound and the damage caused by the Fall, we still must ask a question: How is God to, as the early Christian writer Epiphanius said, "heal the hurt, rebuild the ruins, and repair what was defective...complete what was missing, and perfect what was lacking" in the redemption?[\[73\]](#) How will God achieve a perfect and complete redemption while removing what the Serpent achieved in the Fall?[\[74\]](#)

Superabundant Victory and the Perfect Redemption

The first reaction to the question is to point to Christ's super-sufficient death on the Cross; Jesus, the Son of God, took on flesh and died on the cross. Since He was God in the flesh, His death on the cross is of superabundant value, more than enough to atone for all of the sins of mankind.

Indeed, Christ offered one perfect, super-sufficient, and superabundant sacrifice on the cross. We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, which is more precious than silver or gold (1 Peter 1:18-19). Our redemption in Christ has elevated us, not to the same natural righteousness or son-ship that Adam enjoyed before the Fall, but to supernatural righteousness and son-ship as children of God through adoption (John 1:12; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 3:26, 1 John 3:1).

The super-sufficient and superabundant merit of Christ's life, death, and resurrection have won the victory over sin, death, and the Devil. Of this, there is no doubt. Yet, we often miss an added part of what God has done in the redemption – the context in which Christ superabundantly saves us.

If we don't understand the context of Christ's saving work for us, we miss so much. I will call the context of Christ's completed and saving work, "God's perfect plan of redemption." What is this perfect plan? It is essentially how God redeems us by fulfilling Ground Rules #2 and #3: Christ's redemption is perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing, and Satan's defeat is also perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing.

Football and Redemption

Since American football is a well-known sport, let us use football to help explain the difference between a super-sufficient and the perfect redemption.

John and Ted were friends who enjoyed professional football. But for them, it wasn't simply a hobby. They were football fanatics! Unfortunately, they were not fans of the same team. John was a fan of the hometown team. Ted was a fan of a rival team from another state.

The rivalry between John and Ted was intense. A week's worth of friendly joking and ribbing followed each victory or loss. One year, the unthinkable happened. John and Ted's favorite teams both made it to the Championship. John and Ted's rival teams squared off in a single head-to-head competition.

The championship game was nerve-racking. Each team played flawlessly. Even more, the game was scoreless down to the final minute. John's hometown team was in the perfect position to score on the one yard line of Ted's team. Only one yard to go and the championship title was theirs! A timeout was called. The two teams prepared for the final play. Throughout the day, John's team had gained some success passing the ball to their best receiver. The coach therefore decided to call the same play again.

The teams lined up and the ball was snapped. The quarterback slid back and threw a beautiful pass to their best player, who was waiting for it in the end zone. Suddenly, catastrophe struck! The worst player on Ted's team intercepted the ball. Not only did he intercept the pass, but he evaded the other team's tackles, ran more than 100 yards across the football field, and scored the winning touchdown! The clock clicked to zero.

The game was over! Ted's team had won the championship! The players hoisted the scoring player on their shoulders and gave him the Championship Cup. Ted was ecstatic. John felt nauseous.

The next day, Ted stopped at John's house to gloat. Over and over, he recounted the last play down to the minute detail. John was speechless. He had no comeback. What could he say? In desperation, John assured Ted that next season, if the two teams faced each other again in the championship, Ted would really learn which team was the best. Then Ted would get his just deserts!

However, what kind of victory would despoil Ted of all his reasons for boasting? One scenario would be if the two teams met in the championship and John's team blew Ted's team off the field with a huge victory. Let's say the final score was 128-0, a merciless rout. Would the victory completely "redeem" all that had been lost (the shame and ignominy) in the original championship game? Would it finally silence Ted from gloating over the first victory? What do you think would happen the day following the second championship?

There is no doubt that John would stop by Ted's house to gloat about his team's superabundant victory, describing every tormenting detail. But would that silence Ted? No, Ted could still say, "Sure, you beat my team. You won the championship. But my team still beat your team with only one minute left on the clock. Your team ran their best play with their best receiver, and our worst player intercepted your pass and he ran more than 100 yards. You couldn't even tackle him! And we won! So what if your team won the championship?"

In the previous scenario, John's team won a victory. Indeed, his team scored far more touchdowns than were needed to win the game because only one touchdown sufficed. The victory was super-sufficient for beating Ted's team, but did the victory perfectly "redeem," or win back, all those minor victories that Ted had been boasting about? No, it didn't. How could John's team most perfectly "redeem" themselves so that every aspect of their humiliating loss would finally silence Ted's boasting?

The only way they could "redeem" their loss perfectly would be to win another championship game using all of Ted's team's minor achievements to win the victory. In this scenario, Ted's team would be in scoring position on John's one yard line. Their quarterback would pass the ball to their best player and the worst player on John's team would intercept the pass, evade every tackle, run over 100 yards, and score the winning touchdown with no time left on the clock. Only then would Ted be completely silenced. Only then would the humiliation and shame from their first loss be fully wiped out and their honor fully restored!

Football to Reparation

Turning our attention back to God's plan of redemption, we already noted that Christ's

death on the cross was a superabundant victory. To put it into sports terms, Christ's passion, death, and resurrection was an incredible blowout, far exceeding the 128-0 score in our sports scenario.[\[75\]](#)

As we saw in our football analogy, the blowout victory humbled Ted like never before, yet it failed to address all the minor victories (or achievements) Ted's team had won in the first football championship. In a similar fashion, Christ's superabundant, super-sufficient saving work won our redemption, but it did not address the minor achievements the Devil had carried out in the Fall.

In God's plan of redemption (that is, the context in which Christ carried out His saving work), a perfect victory was achieved. God, in His perfect plan, stripped the Devil of every victory he had won in the beginning.

But how did God do this? In our football analogy, the only way that John's team could completely and perfectly remove their humiliation and shame (ignominy) of their first championship loss would be to win another championship in a reverse fashion. They would have to win the same major victory (i.e., the championship) by using the same minor victories against their opponents. By doing so Ted could no longer brag about the win since all of his minor victories had been taken away or despoiled. Indeed, the minor and major victories that he had boasted about would become signs of Ted's defeat!

Perfectly Redeeming the Fall

How did God "win back" or "repair" the Fall in a reverse fashion? As we have seen, the Serpent brought about the Fall through a series of minor victories. The series began with the Devil approaching the sinless helpmate of Adam, and moved step by step to Adam's sin and the consequences that followed. The Serpent needed each irreducible minor victory to achieve his desired result, just as, in our football analogy, each step of the victory was an irreducible factor that led to the final result.[\[76\]](#)

God's perfect plan of redemption would now achieve those same minor victories the Serpent had used, only in reverse. By winning our redemption in such a fashion God would perfectly repair and restore all that we had lost in the Fall. He would fully despoil the Devil of everything he had gained turning his victories into the very signs of his defeat. In this way, God would fulfill Ground Rules #2 and #3 mentioned earlier in this book.

God's perfect plan of redemption is not merely a restoration of what was lost, but it restores all things to a more glorious state. That's why the Devil's loss is much greater than anything he had gained or achieved. What we lost in the order of nature is restored in the order of supernatural grace, As Paul says, "...where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Christ Jesus" (Romans 5:20-21).

Despoiling the Strong Man

Scripture speaks about God's perfect plan of redemption in a number of ways. For example, when others accused our Lord of casting out demons by the power of the prince of demons (Beelzebub), He replied with an interesting comparison:

"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder" (Luke 11:21-22). [77]

The strong man is the Devil, whom Scripture describes as having a certain dominion over fallen humanity through sin and death (Matthew 4:8-9; Romans 5:12-14, 20-21, 6:6, 16; John 8:44, 2 Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 2:14-15). The stronger man is Christ, who came to destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8). Christ is the one who attacked the Devil's fortress and overpowered him.

*Yet, we must not miss what Jesus then says: He "takes away from him all his armor on which he [the Devil or strong man] had relied." The word translated "armor" (Greek, *panoplia*) refers to the full armor of a foot soldier, which includes offensive and defensive weaponry. [78]*

The weapons that Christ took away are the weapons the Devil himself had used to secure his kingdom. Christ took away these weapons by changing them from weapons of unrighteousness into weapons of righteousness. [79] As Cyril of Jerusalem notes:

"By the very same weapons, therefore, wherewith the Devil used to vanquish us, have we been saved. The Lord took on Him from us our likeness, that He might save man's nature: He took our likeness, that He might give greater grace to that which lacked; that sinful humanity might become partaker of God. 'For where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.'" [80]

Ambrose, another early Christian writer, also wrote:

"The famous Serpent of paradise previously provoked the woman to the sin of adultery. But when its poison had been poured out into this world, the Child of that renowned woman [Mary] avenged the circumvention of the parent [Eve] and the deception of the Serpent, and despoiled him of his weapons and amputated his head." [81]

Christ did not accomplish our redemption simply by taking away these weapons from the Devil any more than each minor victory of the Serpent in the beginning accomplished the Fall. Our redemption is accomplished through Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. The context in which this takes place, God's plan of redemption, is most perfectly fulfilled if these "weapons" are taken back and restored as "weapons of righteousness." By this, the Devil's defeat is made complete. As Robert Jamieson's Commentary, Critical and

Explanatory, on the Old and New Testament states:

"Vain would be the victory, were not the means of regaining his lost power wrested from him. It is this that completes the triumph and ensures the final overthrow of his kingdom."[\[82\]](#)

Affirmed by the Early Church

The early Christians, as well, also recognized how necessary God's perfect plan of Redemption was. They knew that only by a reverse process would the Devil be most perfectly be defeated and would the Fall be most perfectly repaired. Consider the following quotations from the early Church, paying close attention to the words in italics:

Justin Martyr (ca. AD 150) wrote:

"[A]nd that he was made man from the Virgin, in order that by the very way that disobedience began with the Serpent, by that same way the destruction might take place."[\[83\]](#)

Irenaeus of Lyon (ca. AD 180) wrote:

"...[T]he enemy would not have been justly conquered unless a man born of woman had conquered him. For through a woman he got dominion over man in the beginning, setting himself up in opposition to man. For this reason the Lord confessed Himself to be the Son of Man, because He recapitulated in Himself the original man out of whom the handiwork which is woman was made."[\[84\]](#)

"He would make a recapitulation of the disobedience on the tree through the obedience on the tree; and that when the deception would be destroyed by which the virgin Eve, who was already destined for a husband, was wickedly deceived ... For in the same way the sin of the first created man ... receives amendment by the correction of the First-begotten, and the [cunning] of the serpent is conquered by the harmlessness of the dove, those bonds being unloosed by which we had been fast bound to death."[\[85\]](#)

"...And therefore Our Lord took that same original formation as (His) entry into flesh so that he might draw near...and conquer by Adam that by which Adam had stricken us down."[\[86\]](#)

"...[F]or it was necessary and proper to perfect Adam again in Christ... and [to perfect] Eve in Mary."[\[87\]](#)

Tertullian (ca. AD 200/207) wrote:

"And even reason here maintains the same conclusion, because it was by just the contrary operation that God recovered His own image and likeness, of which He had been robbed by the devil."[\[88\]](#)

Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. AD 347/348) wrote:

"The Devil had used the flesh as an instrument against us; and Paul knowing this, saith, 'But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity,' and the rest. By the very same weapons, therefore, wherewith the Devil used to vanquish us, have we been saved. The Lord took on Him from us our likeness, that He might save man's nature: He took our likeness, that He might give greater grace to that which lacked; that sinful humanity might become partaker of God. 'For where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.'" [\[89\]](#)

Pseudo-Athanasius (4th century) says:

"From her flesh and from her bone, and from the old Adam, the New Adam, by opposition, fashioned for Himself the Incarnation..." [\[90\]](#)

Basil the Great (d. 379) wrote:

"So the Devil is our adversary on account of the trial that was induced on us of old through his ambushes; but the Lord established for us a war against him, that when the war had been won through obedience, we might triumph over the enemy." [\[91\]](#)

Pseudo-Gregory the Wonderworker, says:

"The Lord is with you. No longer shall the devil be against you; for where of old that adversary inflicted the wound, there now first of all does the Physician apply the salve of deliverance. Where death came forth, there has life now prepared its entrance. By a woman came the flood of our ills, and by a woman also our blessings have their spring." [\[92\]](#)

John Chrysostom (4th century) wrote:

"By the very means by which the Devil overcame us, Christ overcame him. He [Christ] took up the same weapons and by means of them floored him [the Devil]." [\[93\]](#)

"No, the victory is complete; the triumph perfect, the defeat of the enemy, the slaughter and destruction is total. Eve made you subject to man; but I [God] will make you equal..." [\[94\]](#)

Aphraates (d. 367) wrote:

"Therefore, brethren, because we know and have seen that from the beginning it was through woman that the adversary had access unto men, and to the end he will accomplish it by her [Eve]— for she is the weapon of Satan...For because of her [Eve] the curse of the Law was established, and because of her the promise unto death was made. For with pangs she bears children and delivers them to death. Because of her the earth was cursed, that it should bring forth thorns and tares. Accordingly, [on the contrary] by the coming of the offspring of the Blessed Mary the thorns are uprooted, the sweat

wiped away, the fig-tree cursed...the dust made salt...the curse nailed to the cross...the edge of the sword removed from before the tree of life and it given as food to the faithful, and Paradise promised to the blessed and to virgins and to the saints." [\[95\]](#)

Epiphanius of Salamis (4th century) wrote:

"And so since 'death <had entered into> the world through a woman, the Master and Savior of all, whose desire was to heal the hurt, rebuild the ruins, and repair what was defective, came down and was himself born of a virgin woman to bar death out, complete what was missing, and perfect what was lacking." [\[96\]](#)

"And because of this the Son of God came into the world; and, 'where sin abounded, grace did more abound' (Romans 5:20); and where death had been, there life preceded that life might be in place of death ... Really, He came to take away the power of the dragon and of the crooked and exiled serpent, which boasted of having dominion over the whole world. Because of this reason the Only-begotten came from a Woman; for the overthrow of the Serpent..." [\[97\]](#)

Ephrem of Syria (4th century) wrote:

"The Word of the Father, dropped and descended into the ear, through which evil had entered, observed the heel of the Serpent, followed his steps, and with his breath washed away the gall of the Dragon..." [\[98\]](#)

Ambrose (4th century) wrote:

"You will be defeated, and today He will take over your ambushes...But when its poison had been poured out into this world, the Child of that renowned Woman [Mary] avenged the circumvention of the parent [Eve] and the deception of the Serpent, and despoiled him of his weapons and amputated his head." [\[99\]](#)

"But the Lord, who wished his benefits to endure, who wished to destroy all the wiles of the serpent, and also to root out everything harmful, first gave sentence upon the man, Earth thou art, and unto earth thou shall go;...A remedy was granted that man should die, and rise again. Why? In order that the thing which had been previously counted as a condemnation, might be counted as a benefit." [\[100\]](#)

Amphilochius of Iconium (d. 394)

"What a grand and most wise strategy against the devil! The world, which had once fallen under the power of sin because of a virgin, is now restored to freedom because of a Virgin. Through the virginal birth, a great multitude of invisible demons has been cast down to Tartarus." [\[101\]](#)

Cyril of Alexandria (5th century) wrote:

"In the future it was necessary that the Creator of all things provide for his creatures who

sin according to the likeness of the transgress of Adam...so it is not obscure that even in the first Adam the mystery concerning Christ was then patterned, not indeed typified by similarity without any difference, but being different and containing it in an opposite figure."[\[102\]](#)

Leo the Great (5th century) wrote:

"...this very fact that Christ chose to be born of a Virgin does it not appear to be part of the deepest design?...For though the true mercy of God had infinitely many schemes to hand for the restoration of mankind, it chose that particular design which it put in force for destroying the devil's work, not the efficacy of might but the dictates of justice. For the pride of the ancient foe not undeservedly made good its despotic rights over all men...And so there would be no justice in his losing the immemorial slavery of the human race, were he not conquered by that which he had subjugated."[\[103\]](#)

Theodotus of Ancyra (middle of 5th century) wrote:

"[I]t pleased the most powerful and wise Lord, as an excellent physician, to visit the sick for the sake of giving them opportune help...When therefore the fullness of time came...then the remedies were made manifest."[\[104\]](#)

Eusebius of Alexandria (5th century) wrote:

"... And so God has turned upon the Devil, to defeat him, the same weapons by which he inflicted death on the first Parents in paradise..."[\[105\]](#)

Basil of Seleucia (5th century) wrote:

"For Christ' presence is much stronger then the voracity of the First Parent (Adam) ... He put on the Second Adam, healing the wounds with the contrary medicines..."[\[106\]](#)

Chrysippus of Jerusalem (5th century) wrote:

"Really, how much time would I need to narrate by what means He (Christ) triumphed over me (the Devil), who was born of her (Mary)... Indeed it would have been better for me not to deceive her by means of the serpent. Really, what did I gain by the circumvention if those whom I reduced to slavery I now see receive the pristine liberty, even together with that prior liberty, to become the heirs of the kingdom of heaven itself?"[\[107\]](#)

Hesychius of Jerusalem (5th century) wrote:

"...who freed Eve from the shame and Adam from the threat, and cut off the audacity of the Dragon."[\[108\]](#)

Pseudo-Gregory the Wonderworker (3rd – 4th century) wrote:

"Gabriel was sent to a virgin, in order to transform the dishonour of the female sex into honour..." [\[109\]](#)

Augustine (4th century) wrote:

"The purpose of this is that the Devil might be defeated and punished by both natures... [male and female]... because he was exultant about the victory over both. And he would have been insufficiently punished if both sexes in us would have been liberated but not through both sexes." [\[110\]](#)

Pseudo-Augustine (5th century) wrote:

"...[H]uman nature was restored by the Lord Jesus Christ by the same steps by which it had perished..." [\[111\]](#)

Peter Chrysologus (5th century) wrote:

"You have heard that it deals with this, that man would return to life by the same route by which he fell into death." [\[112\]](#)

Eleutherius of Tourney (6th century) wrote:

"The Eternal Father, considering the ruin of the human race through the Serpent's deceit; was pleased to liberate the world by the Incarnation of His Only-begotten Son so that as woman [Eve] had been cast forth... [Explains the roles of the New Adam and the New Eve]." [\[113\]](#)

The same idea flows throughout these quotations: "By the same manner," in "like fashion," by a "rival process," taking up "the same weapons," healing with "contrary medicines," returning by "the same route," following "the same steps," "taking over the devil's ambushes," "rebuilding the ruins," using an "opposite figure," in "like pattern," "recapitulating" or "reheading up." [\[114\]](#) *All these speak to one thing, God's perfect plan of Redemption.*

Like an expert jeweler using a flaw in a diamond to cut a perfect stone, God's plan of redemption restored humanity. It reversed the sequence of shameful and ignominious defeats into the most glorious facets of our redemption. By doing so, Christ has fully conquered the Devil, leaving him without any "bragging rights." The victories the Devil gained in the beginning had simply become reminders of his supreme defeat.

Don't Get Typecast

To some, what we have just explained may seem like typology, the study of persons, places, items, and events in the Old Testament that foreshadow something in the New Testament. For example, Israel crossing the Jordan River could be a foreshadowing of baptism in the New Testament.

The problem with typology is that it often relies more on the reader's imagination than anything in the sacred text. What looks like an obvious foreshadowing for one person may be a deniable connection for another. Typology is a valid and true way of understanding Scripture, but people can easily abuse it. Even more, we don't want to confuse God's perfect plan of redemption with typology. [\[115\]](#)

God's perfect plan of redemption revisits what we lost in the beginning, in order to repair and restore, and to remove the shame and disgrace of our first parents' defeat. Typology, however, has no necessity at work in its method. There is no necessity that the act of crossing the Jordan must have a New Testament counterpart or antitype. [\[116\]](#) *In God's perfect plan of redemption, however, it is crucial that what was lost should be restored and "won back," as it were, by God.*

Redemption Accomplished

We now take a look at God's plan of redemption in detail. To begin, we should affirm our first Ground Rule--Christ alone saves.

In the Fall, only Adam's disobedience accomplished the Fall of mankind. The Woman's sin did not do this, nor did the combined sins of Adam and the Woman. In Adam, we all died (Romans 5:17). When God despoiled the Devil of this ultimate (albeit temporary) victory, the same applied. Christ's obedience alone saved and redeemed mankind – period! Mary's obedience did not achieve any more in the redemption than the Woman's sin achieved in the Fall. Adam's disobedience alone accomplished the Fall; Christ's obedience alone accomplished our redemption!

Although Adam's disobedience accomplished the Fall, more was going on in the Fall than simply Adam's sin. The Devil had carried out a string of victories that led up to Adam's sin, and certain consequences necessarily followed.

Put another way, it's true that the Fall was accomplished by one sex, the man, Adam. However, the Devil used both sexes in his rebellion against God. Even more, each sex, man and woman, both had their respective roles in that rebellion. Because of this, both sexes bore their own respective disgrace and shame for what their first parents had done. Men were disgraced by Adam, whose weakness and selfishness disinherited the entire human race. Women were disgraced by Eve, who sinned first and then cooperated with the Serpent to encourage her husband to sin as well.

God's plan of redemption would restore or rehabilitate both sexes by using each gender according to their original respective role. By doing this, God would do away with all the Devil's victories and both sexes would no longer bear their respective shame and ignominy. As Augustine puts it:

The purpose of this [Christ being born of Mary] is that the Devil might be defeated and punished by both natures, that is, by the feminine and the masculine, because he was

exultant about the victory over both. And he would have been insufficiently punished if both sexes in us had been liberated but not through both sexes. [\[117\]](#)

Since both sexes were involved in the Fall, God would involve both sexes in His perfect plan of redemption. Christ, as Augustine notes, was born of a woman for the purpose that God would use both sexes to defeat and punish the devil. Augustine adds that if this were not the case (that is, if both sexes weren't involved) the devil "would have been insufficiently punished."

Augustine's observation is essential. The New Adam, Jesus Christ, has removed the shame that Adam's sin had foisted on all men. But what about the shame caused by the Woman, Eve, that was borne by all women? If God had not used a woman in His plan of redemption, He would not have removed the shame of Eve's involvement in the way He wanted to remove it. Also, God would not have adequately punished the Devil. The Devil could still boast against God, "Yes, you have defeated me. But I still deceived the Woman and she cooperated with my plan. She lost her glory, immortality, and was exiled. You defeated me through a man, but I still won over and used the Woman as my instrument against you!" God's perfect plan of redemption, as Augustine noted, included both sexes to restore what was lost and to justly punish the Devil. Augustine is not alone. Several early Christians understood God's plan of redemption in the same way. For example:

Tertullian wrote (d. 220):

"For it was while Eve was yet a virgin that the ensnaring word had crept into her ear which was to build the edifice of death. Into a virgin's soul, in like manner, must be introduced that Word of God which was to raise the fabric of life; so that what had been reduced to ruin by this sex might by the selfsame sex be recovered to salvation." [\[118\]](#)

Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. AD 180) wrote:

"For indeed the enemy would not have been fairly [justly] vanquished, unless it had been a man [born] of a woman who conquered him. For it was by means of a woman that he got the advantage [dominion] over man at first, setting himself up as man's opponent." [\[119\]](#)

Later, Severianus of Syria (d. ca. 452) wrote:

"What then? Is the female sex doomed to sentence of condemnation kept in sorrows and the bond not loosed? Christ who looses the bond has come. She who brought forth the Lord has presented herself as Advocate for her sex, the holy Virgin in place of the virgin (Eve). For Eve too was a virgin when she sinned." [\[120\]](#)

Atticus (406-425) wrote:

"On account of her (Mary) all women are blessed. The feminine sex is no longer under the curse. For their sex obtained (the privilege) of surpassing even the angels' glory."

[\[121\]](#)

Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373) wrote:

"Two virgins were given to the human race; one was the cause of life, the other of death. The Daughter (Mary) supported the fallen mother. Since the mother had put on herself leaves of ignominy, the Daughter wove for her a robe of glory and give it to her...Through Mary hope was given to the feminine sex..."[\[122\]](#)

And Fulgentius (ca AD 533) wrote:

"But why is it that our God thus willed to form us anew to life by being born of a virgin? It was that since through a woman death entered into the world, salvation might be restored through a Virgin... that she might succor all women who fly to her protection; and thus restore the whole race of women as the New Eve, even as the New Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, repaired the whole race of men."[\[123\]](#)

Fulgentius knew, as do we, that Christ alone saves and redeems all-- both men and women. His statement, however, focused, not so much on salvation, but instead on wiping away the ignominy, sorrow, and shame that Adam and Eve had caused. By bringing about a New Adam (Jesus) and a New Eve (Mary), God restored honor to both sexes.

Just as the Woman's role in the Fall differed significantly from Adam's role, Mary's role in God's plan of redemption differed significantly from Christ's role. As we mentioned earlier, only Adam's disobedience accomplished the Fall.

Only Christ's obedience accomplished our salvation and redemption. Yet, the Woman still had a role in the Fall. Through her disobedience in the Fall, the Woman brought about the circumstances for Adam's sin. Similarly, Mary's obedience to the words of the angel provided the circumstances through which the Incarnation (God's becoming flesh) took place. Because of the Incarnation Jesus could save us through His death and resurrection.

Mary in God's Plan

Using what we learned in Chapter 2, we now look at each step of the Serpent's plan in the Fall and see how God has redeemed and restored each step. This chapter will list each step of the Fall as a subtitle, and each subtitle will have a footnote with a sampling of the words of early Christians who recognized the stated point. The text that then follows each subtitle will provide the Scripture that speaks to each point.

A Virgin is approached by an Angel[\[124\]](#)

The Devil's plan began by approaching the virgin Woman (Genesis 3:1, Revelation 12:9, 20:2). In opposite form, God sent an unfallen angel, Gabriel, to the Virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18, Luke 1:19).[\[125\]](#)

The Message and Acceptance[\[126\]](#)

The Devil, a fallen angel, spoke to the betrothed virgin and deceived her with a lie (Genesis 3:1-5, John 8:44, 2 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:14). An unfallen angel spoke to Mary, a betrothed virgin, and told her of the Good News, which she accepted (Matthew 1:18, 23, Luke 1:27-38).

Alliance Not Changed[\[127\]](#)

In the beginning, the sinless Woman believed the Serpent's lie, and ceased to trust and follow God. Her husband listened to her counsel and followed the Serpent (Genesis 3:6). In the redemption, an angel appeared to Mary, who was already in God's favor (Luke 1:28) and told her the Good News. Mary consented to the angel's words (Luke 1:38) and she remained in her "blessed" state (Luke 1:45, 11:28).

Instrument of God[\[128\]](#)

Eve became the Serpent's instrument and brought about the circumstances for Adam's disobedience (Genesis 3:6, Sirach 25:23 [24]).[\[129\]](#) Mary, through her faith and fidelity, became the instrument that God used to bring about the New Adam, Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:16, Galatians 4:4, Revelation 12:5). Unlike Eve, she remained faithful to God throughout her life (Luke 1:38, John 2:1-10, 19:25-27, Acts 1:14).

Redemption Accomplished[\[130\]](#)

The Woman, Eve, brought about the circumstances through which Adam fell. She offered her husband the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, the fruit being a necessary precondition for Adam's sin. In the redemption, the fruit that Mary offered was the fruit of her womb (Luke 1:42): the Word become flesh (John 1:14). Christ received His human nature from Mary, which provided the circumstances through which our redemption was accomplished, Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection.

When Christ came into the world through His Incarnation in Mary, as Hebrews 10:5-7 beautifully puts it, He said:

"Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, But a body You have prepared for Me; In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (In the scroll of the book it is written of Me) To do Your will, O God.'" [\[131\]](#)

Adam was offered the fruit of the forbidden tree and he disobeyed God by eating it. A body was prepared for Christ from Mary so that He would carry out God's Will being obedient "...unto death, even death on the cross" (Philippians 2:8, Hebrews 5:8-9).[\[132\]](#) Proclus of Selucia, writing about the birth of Christ, explained:

"Think not, O man, that this is a birth to be ashamed of, since it was made the cause of

our salvation. For if He had not been born of woman, He had not died; and if, in the flesh, He had not died, neither would He have destroyed him through death, who had the empire of death, that is, the devil." [\[133\]](#)

Peter Chrysologus summarizes the same thought more succinctly:

"[W]ithout Mary neither death could be done away with, nor life restored." [\[134\]](#)

These early Christians were echoing what the Letter to the Hebrews had stated about the Incarnation and Christ's victory over the Devil:

"For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, 'I will proclaim Your name to My brethren, In the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise'... Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives." [\[135\]](#)

Christ's saving work did not stop with His death on the cross, but also extended to His resurrection, for Paul says, "... [I]f Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (1 Corinthians 15:17-18). Just as the Incarnation was a necessary precondition for Christ's sacrifice on the cross, that same flesh needed to be made alive and glorified in the resurrection. Both of these events were necessary for our salvation since Christ who was "handed over for our transgressions and was raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). Both of these events required the Incarnation. Just as the Woman's disobedience made possible Adam's sin, death, and corruption (Genesis 3:17), Mary's obedience made possible the New Adam's obedience, resurrection, and escape from corruption (Acts 2:27-31).

The Fall was accomplished through Adam's sin. Redemption was accomplished through Christ's obedience. The Fall also had personal consequences for Adam, the Woman, and their offspring. The redemption had personal consequences for the New Adam, the New Eve, and those who are regenerated in Christ, the New Adam.

Redemption Accomplished: Consequences Applied

God's plan of redemption did not end at Christ's resurrection, any more than the Devil's plan ended at Adam's sin. With Adam, certain consequences inevitably followed and were part of the Devil's overall design.

In the Fall, Adam and his wife received in their persons, body and soul, the just rewards

for their rebellion. Having lost their original innocence and righteousness through sin, they were reduced from glory to shame. [\[136\]](#) Because of their sin, God barred them from the Tree of Life so that they would not live forever in their fallen state. He cast them out of Paradise, so that they died and their once glorious bodies were corrupted.

But in God's perfect plan of redemption, defeats were turned into victories, punishments were turned into rewards. God restored what Adam and the Woman had lost in the Fall through the New Adam and the New Eve.

Glorification [\[137\]](#)

Adam was "crowned with glory and honor" as the Psalmist said (Psalms 8:4-7). The Woman shared in Adam's glory, since she is the glory of man (1 Corinthians 11:7-8). However, after the Fall, Adam and his wife lost their original glory, clothing themselves with fig leaves (Genesis 3:7); later, God replaced their figs with the skins of animals (Genesis 3:21). [\[138\]](#)

In contrast, Christ's obedience won Him a crown of glory and glorious garments (1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 1:11; Hebrews 2:7, 9; Revelation 1:13, 5:12, 4:11). Mary also received glory and honor (Revelation 12:1, Luke 1:48-49, 52 cf. Isaiah 61:10).

Entrance into Paradise [\[139\]](#)

After God had pronounced judgment on the Serpent, He cast Adam and his wife out of Paradise so they would not eat from the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:14-19).

God's perfect plan of redemption did not let the Devil keep these victories. We learn from the New Testament that Eden is not the only place of Paradise. There is a true Paradise and Tree of Life that is in heaven. God exiled Adam from Paradise and he was barred access to the Tree of Life, but Christ, by His obedience to the Father's will, ascended to Paradise in heaven (Acts 1:9; 2 Corinthians 12:4-5, Revelation 2:7, 22:2, 14, and 19), where He lives and reigns forever and gives of the Tree of Life to those who overcome.

God exiled Adam from Paradise and barred him from the Tree of Life, but Christ, the New Adam ascends to the greater and more glorious Paradise, heaven, where the true Tree of Life resides.

Since both sexes were involved in the Fall and both sexes were exiled, God's perfect plan of redemption also despoiled the Serpent of his victory over the woman, for which she was exiled from Paradise. And so, it follows that the New Eve, Mary, was also taken to the heavenly Paradise with the New Adam.

The Ascension and the Assumption

The precision Scripture gives to this event is remarkable. In the Fall, Adam alone was

directly and formally exiled from Paradise.

Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us... and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever' — therefore the Lord God sent him [third person, masculine singular] out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he [third person, masculine singular] was taken. So he drove the man out...[\[140\]](#)

We know that God exiled Eve as well because Scripture later speaks of her being with Adam in exile (Genesis 4:1, et al.). Christ, the New Adam, alone ascended to the Paradise of Heaven. This is directly and formally stated in Scripture (Acts 1:9-11, John 20:17, Ephesians 4:8-9, et al.). The only way we know that the New Eve was also taken to Paradise is that she is seen afterwards in heaven (Revelation 12:1-5).

Here's how it all fits together. Adam and Eve allied themselves with the Serpent in the Fall. The punishment they received was based on their respective roles in that rebellion. In God's plan of redemption, He allies Jesus and Mary (the New Adam and New Eve) with Himself and they remain faithful to Him. Therefore they receive the reward for their obedience in accord with their respective roles.

The demonic achievement of Adam's banishment from Paradise and the Tree of Life is "won back" by Christ's Ascension into Paradise in heaven where the Tree of Life resides. Also, the Woman's exile is "won back" by the New Eve's Assumption into heaven. Both sexes were disgraced and both sexes are restored.

Even the way Christ and Mary enter heaven parallels how Adam and Eve were exiled. As we have seen above, Adam's disobedience earned his expulsion from Paradise. God, therefore, formally and directly exiled him (Genesis 3:22-24). But the Woman is different. God never formally cast her out, even though she is with Adam in exile (Genesis 4:1). It stands to reason that Adam must have brought the Woman into exile with him.

In God's perfect plan of redemption, Christ's obedience earns His entrance, that is His Ascension, into Paradise in heaven (John 3:13, 20:17; Acts 2:34; Ephesians 4:9-10, Hebrews 4:14). Mary, however, did not ascend to heaven. But just as Adam brought the woman into exile, Christ the New Adam brought Mary into the heavenly Paradise.

Here, we see a distinction that Catholics make between Jesus' Ascension and Mary's Assumption into heaven. Jesus ascended to heaven to take His office as King and Priest. Mary was brought, body and soul, into Paradise, because she was the New Adam's faithful ally in the redemption.[\[141\]](#)

In the beginning, both sexes were exiled from Paradise. According to Augustine (and our Ground Rules #1 and #2), God's perfect plan of redemption healed these original wounds, took away the disgrace, and plundered the Devil of all his victories. Both sexes, then,

entered Paradise. This properly punished the Devil, as Augustine said, and, according to Ground Rule #2, made complete God's plan of redemption.

Freedom from Corruption

In exile, Adam, Eve, and their children were subject to death and corruption. Corruption is the deepest degradation of Adam's and Eve's once glorious bodies. [\[142\]](#) Christ and Mary's bodies, because of the Ascension and the Assumption, were preserved from corruption. [\[143\]](#) Paul's words would certainly apply to them, "For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Galatians 6:8). In God's perfect plan of redemption, Mary and Jesus are delivered from corruption, despoiling the Serpent of his victory over our first parents.

Dominion Restored[\[144\]](#)

God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and have dominion over all the works of His hand (Genesis 1:28, Psalms 8:6). By having children, Adam and his wife would gain dominion over the earth.

When we think about the command to have dominion over the earth, we sometimes link that command with Adam and Eve giving birth to their children, and then later dying. Thousands of years later, their descendants fill the earth and reign over it. The problem with that understanding is that it assumes the death of Adam and Eve, which was the result of the Fall. But God did not create death. Death came through Adam's sin (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). God created our first parents to be imperishable. [\[145\]](#) Had God's original design remained, and had Adam not sinned, they would have never died. Their reign over the works of God's hands, therefore, would have been lived concurrently with their offspring until the end of time.

However, through Adam's sin, all of humanity became slaves to sin, death, and the power of the Devil. To use Paul's words, "death reigned" (Romans 5:17), and we became subject to the one who had the power of death, the Devil (Hebrews 2:14). How was God to take away this achievement of the Devil?

God's perfect plan of redemption reversed this demonic victory of the loss of dominion. Through the reign of the New Adam, everything was brought into subjection to Him (Hebrews 2:6-9). Hebrews 2 applies Psalm 8:5-7, which speaks of Adam, to Christ. God the Father gave Christ universal dominion and "crowned" Him "with glory and honor."

God's command to Adam and the Woman "be fruitful and multiply" was linked to having dominion over the world. Christ's dominion, as we shall soon see, is tied to children as well, but with an important difference.

Redemption Applied

Adam and Eve received the just reward for their sin, according to their respective roles in the Fall. God's perfect plan of redemption won what was lost by restoring the just reward for the New Adam and the New Eve, each according to their respective role. The consequences of the Fall also affected Adam's offspring. The fruit of his sin was "applied" in history through his descendants. How would God restore this victory?

The Extension of God's Dominion Through the New Birth[\[146\]](#)

Sin and its effects are passed on from generation to generation through physical birth. Through it, the Devil would have extended his dominion over the earth.

God's perfect plan of redemption removes this trophy in a remarkable way. Adam's sin spread through the natural generation of children. God applies Christ's redemption through spiritual re-generation or the second birth. And so the offspring of the New Adam do not become His children by natural birth, but by being "born of water and Spirit," that is, being "born from above" (John 3:3-7, Romans 5:17, 21; 6:3-5). This being born of water and Spirit takes place when the Holy Spirit and the water of baptism come together. That is how one is "born from above."[\[147\]](#)

Dominion Revisited

Had Adam not sinned, he would have reigned with his children throughout time. But that didn't happen. So Jesus, the New Adam became Incarnate to make right what Adam had made wrong. Christ's reign, not Adam's, is concurrent with the children of God throughout time. He is seated at the Father's right hand in heaven:

"...far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He [the Father] put all things in subjection under His [the Son's] feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:21-23).

Christ began His reign with His Ascension and enthronement, but His dominion extends over the earth through His Body, the Church. Hebrews 2:8 states that we do not, right now, see everything subjected to Jesus, although we do see him now crowned with glory and honor. Christ's rule is hidden to us, but it will be fully accomplished at the end of time:

"For he [Christ] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be abolished is death" (1 Corinthians 15:25).

Only then, when Christ hands everything over to the Father, will there be "a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

The New Eve and the New Birth

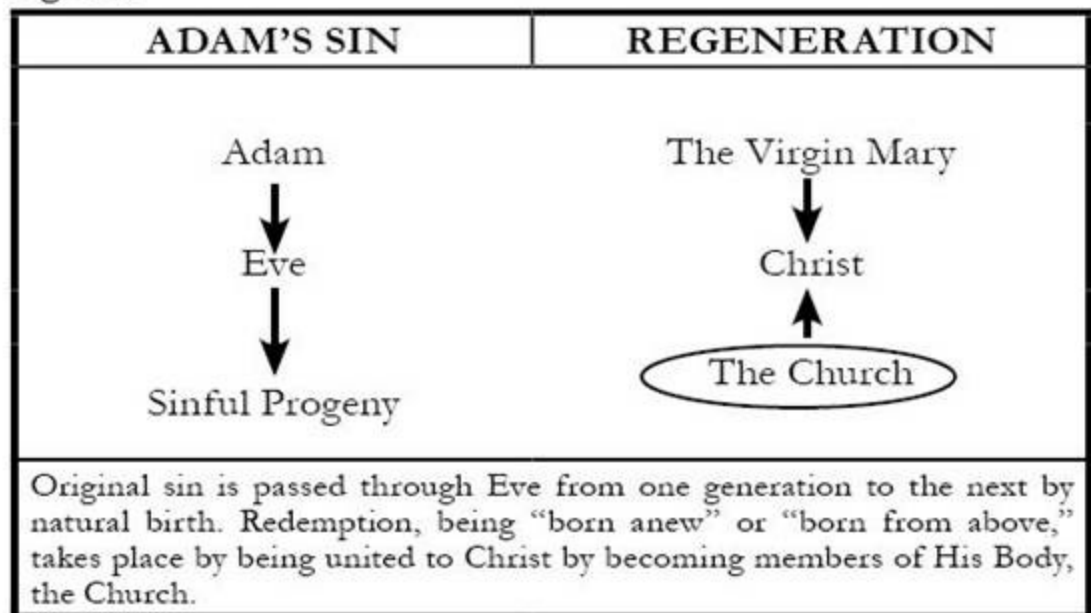
Yet, one satanic trophy remains—Eve's role in the extending the Devil's dominion. God

told Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply,” to have dominion under Adam’s covenant headship. After the Fall, Eve was called the “mother of all the living” (Genesis 3:20) even though she was the mother of all Adam’s fallen offspring (Genesis 4:1-2, 25, 5:4) who are born “subject to slavery all their lives” (Hebrews 2:15).

But how would God undo Eve’s participation in the propagation of the fallen children of Adam? Eve was the mother of all the living” because all the physical descendents of Adam came through her. Mary is the “mother of all the living” because she is the mother of Jesus, Who is the Life and the only way to the Father (John 14:6).

God’s reparation, in this case, is similar to, yet different from, the thing repaired. In natural childbirth, the child becomes a individual distinct from his parents. In the spiritual birth, when one is “born again” and regenerated, the Holy Spirit brings distinct individuals into the one body of Christ, the Church. As Paul said, “so we who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Romans 12:5. Also see, Ephesians 2:13-16, 4:4-6).

Figure 1



Therefore, Eve is called the “mother of all the living” because all physical descendents of Adam came through her. Mary is uniquely and truly the “mother of all the living” because she is the mother of Jesus, Who is the Life and the only way to the Father (John 14:6), and all who are “born of water and Spirit” are united to Christ and members of His body (Figure 1).

"He [Death] came then to Eve the Mother of all living. This is the vine whose fence Death laid open by her own hands, and caused her to taste of his fruits. So Eve, the Mother of

all living, became the well-spring of death to all living. But Mary budded forth, a new shoot from Eve the ancient vine; and new life [Christ] dwelt in her..."[148]

Mary does not "give birth" to the regenerate. No, instead, she gives birth to Jesus, in Whom all are "born anew." God restores Eve's fallen motherhood through Mary's motherhood of Christ.

Conclusion

God could have redeemed us in a different way and it still would have been a super-sufficient victory over sin, death, and the Devil. But God chose to redeem us in a most perfect fashion. He took all the Devil's minor victories against us and used them to repair and restore what was lost. In Christ, all that was brought to ruin was restored; the Serpent was allowed to keep nothing that he had won.

Since a man and a woman each took part in the Fall, God showed His love for us by allowing both sexes to take place in the redemption, each according to its respective role. Because God chose a perfect plan of redemption, and chose to defeat the devil completely, He also chose that Mary should play an important role in His plan.

Like Eve, Mary is a betrothed virgin whom an angel approached. She is the one who believed the good angel's truthful words, and who thus became the instrument through whom the New Adam was born to redeem the world. Mary also received through her obedience what Eve had lost through her disobedience. Eve had lost her original glory, honor, righteousness, innocence, Paradise, immortality, incorruption, and dominion under Adam. Mary retained or received what Eve lost. Through a singular grace of God, Mary was created innocent and righteous, as Eve was, but by grace she remained obedient to God. Eve's exile was replaced by Mary's entrance into heavenly Paradise. There mortality is replaced with immortality and corruption is replaced with incorruption. She is the "mother of all the living" because she conceived and gave birth to Him, in Whom we have life (1 John 5:12).

Without Mary, Christ's saving work would still have been more than sufficient to win our salvation. But it would not have been enough to repair all that we had lost. Therefore, God, in His infinite mercy, used both sexes in His perfect plan of redemption. God repaired each of the Devil's victories in a most perfect way, a New Eve in place of the old Eve, and a New Adam in place of the old Adam.

God's perfect plan of redemption supplies the biblical and patristic rationale for the Roman Catholic doctrines of Mary's Immaculate Conception, her consequent fidelity to God, her role as co-redemptrix, advocate, her Queenship, glorification, and Assumption. All these were things Eve had lost in the Fall. There is nothing in the Fall that God did not restore in an even greater fashion in our redemption.

In Summary

** The Serpent achieved one minor victory after another until he reached his goal with the Fall of Adam. Once Adam sinned, the consequences of his sin brought ruin upon his children and himself, leaving in their wake shame and indignation.*

** Christ's saving work on the cross was more than sufficient to undo the sin of Adam and redeem the world. How God brought about Christ's saving work is God's perfect plan of redemption. In it, God despoils the Serpent (the Devil) of every victory he won in the Fall and repairs it in a more glorious fashion.*

** "When a strong man [the Devil], fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. But when someone stronger than he [Christ] attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder" (Luke 11:21-22). God's perfect plan of redemption takes away all that the Devil achieved in the Fall and restores it in our redemption.*

** God won our redemption using the Devil's plan against him. The Serpent approached the Woman, a betrothed sinless virgin, gained her friendship, and seduced her to sin. She then cooperated with the Devil's plan and gave the fruit to Adam (perhaps persuading or encouraging him to eat). [\[149\]](#) Adam sinned. God punished Adam and the Woman for their sins. Adam and Eve further continued their part in the Devil's plan by spreading his dominion throughout the world through their fallen offspring. God raised up a New Adam and a New Eve in that another angel approached another betrothed virgin, Mary, and told her the Good News. Mary believed the angel and remained faithful to God, cooperating in God's plan, by giving birth to Christ. Christ, the New Adam was obedient to death, and won our redemption. Through Him we are saved and receive the New Birth. God rewarded the New Adam and New Eve by receiving him back into Paradise where the Tree of Life resides.*

** God's perfect plan of redemption is not typological. Rather, it is the way God most perfectly repaired all that we lost in the Fall through Adam and Eve.*

** God's perfect plan of redemption fulfills all three of our Ground Rules. By using the Serpent's plan against him, God wins our redemption in a full and perfect way that lacks nothing. Moreover, the Devil's defeat was made perfect and complete.*

As Augustine noted, the Devil used both sexes to lead up to the Fall. Thus, if God had not used both sexes in our redemption, the Devil would have been insufficiently punished.

** Adam's sin alone brought about the Fall of mankind. In a similar way, the New Adam's obedient death on the cross and His resurrection alone won our redemption. Also, just as Adam's helpmate's disobedience provided the circumstances in which Adam fell, the New Eve's obedience to God's word provided the circumstances for our redemption through the Incarnation.*

** Christ's redemption does not simply bring us back to where we were before the Fall; it raises us up to new heights. For Christ received not only dominion over the earth, but universal dominion. Adam sinned and lost his original glory, the New Adam received glory and honor. Where Adam was driven from Paradise so he would not eat from the Tree of Life, the New Adam ascends to Paradise in Heaven where the true Tree of Life resides. Where Adam extended the Devil's dominion over the earth through offspring born in sin. Christ extends the dominion of God over the earth through those who are born from above.*

** Mary, the New Eve. received glory and honor as her reward. Where Eve was found outside of Paradise with Adam after he was cast out of it, Mary is found in the Paradise of heaven with the New Adam after He had ascended to the right hand of God. Mary also received dominion as a mother, not by physically bearing children, but through her*

association with Christ and those united to Him through the second or spiritual birth.

** The biblical and patristic rationale for the Immaculate Conception, for Mary's perfect obedience, for her perpetual virginity, for her roles as co-redemptrix, co-mediatrix, advocate, and Queen, and for her glorification and Assumption into heaven, are all found within God's perfect plan. of redemption.*

Chapter 4 The First Gospel

In our exploration into the Fall of Adam in Genesis, chapter 3 we only briefly touched upon an important passage, Genesis 3:15. It is the first direct prophecy of the coming of the Messiah in Scripture, the first Good-News or First Gospel. This passage has much to say about Jesus and His mother.

In Genesis 3, the Serpent appeared in Paradise and successfully deceived the Woman into believing that he, not God, had her best interest at heart. The Woman, believing the Serpent was her friend, believed his lie. The Woman, then, changed alliances from Adam and God to the Serpent. She cooperated with the Devil's plan and offered the forbidden fruit to her husband and counseled him to eat it. Adam then ate the fruit and joined in her rebellion against God. God pronounced His sentence on the three protagonists, the Serpent, Adam, and the Woman (Genesis 3:14-19). The first to be cursed was the Serpent (the Devil). Genesis 3:14 reads:

"The LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this...'"

This verse leads us to ask a related question. What does "this" point to in Genesis 3:14? It refers to all that has transpired in Genesis 3 up to this point.

God punished the Serpent (Devil) in the following way:

"On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life..."

What an odd thing to say to a fallen angel. What could "eating dust" possibly mean? Consider this. The Devil had just exalted himself in the Fall, bringing down Adam and the human race, and gaining dominion over the earth. We find that elsewhere in Scripture the idea of eating or licking dust is associated with one's enemies being reduced to a place of servitude or even destruction. For example:

"Kings will be your guardians, And their princesses your nurses. They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth And lick the dust of your feet" (Isaiah 49:23).

"Let the nomads of the desert bow before him, And his enemies lick the dust. Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring presents; The kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts. And let all kings bow down before him, All nations serve him" (Psalms 72:9–11).

"They will lick the dust like a serpent, Like reptiles of the earth. They will come trembling out of their fortresses; To the Lord our God they will come in dread And they will be afraid before You" (Micah 7:17).

The Scripture shows us that the Serpent did not lose his legs, instead God's punishment was that He would not allow whatever the Serpent had gained or achieved to stand. Rather, the Serpent would be reduced to servitude (i.e., eating dust).

Through the Fall, the Devil became the illegitimate “ruler of this world” and gained dominion over mankind (Matthew 4:8-9, John 12:31, 16:11). But God’s judgment on the Devil was that one day he would be brought low, cast out of his kingdom, and humbled (John 12:31).

Verse 15 states how the Devil would be conquered:

"And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." (Genesis 3:15).

Genesis 3:16-19 then continues, showing God’s judgment on the Woman and Adam.

Although God’s words to Adam and the Woman are important, our main focus, in this chapter, is God’s condemnation of the Serpent in Genesis 3:15 because it is the first prophecy in Scripture that the Messiah would one day conquer the Devil.

Examining Genesis 3:15

Some find Genesis 3:15 to be difficult to understand because there are several pronouns packed into only a few lines. It is easy to get lost as to who or what is being spoken of in this passage. To help make this verse a little more clear, I have replaced the pronouns with nouns and italicized them below:

"And I God will put enmity between the Serpent and the Woman, and between the Serpent’s seed and the Woman’s seed; the Woman’s seed shall bruise [or crush] the Serpent on the head, And you the Serpent shall bruise [or crush] the Woman’s Seed on the heel."

This prophecy is short, but packed with information. Let us work through each line of the passage, identifying the characters, and examining the actions.

“I will put...”

The Serpent’s undoing will be by God’s direct action. God Himself will bring about the Serpent’s downfall, not man. This will take place sometime in the future. [\[150\]](#)

These words also tell us that God will introduce a new state of affairs. Although the devil has exalted himself and achieved dominion over mankind, God is going to put in a new order of things.

Enmity

Through a false friendship, the Serpent (Devil) recruited our first parents to join him in rebellion against God. Since no one can serve two masters, he will either love the one and despise the other or be devoted to one and despise the other (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13), Adam and the Woman became friends with the Serpent and made themselves at

enmity [hostility, warfare] with God (compare James 4:4). [\[151\]](#)

God is going to change this situation. He will introduce enmity where it currently did not exist. [\[152\]](#) Since enmity and friendship are mutually exclusive, God essentially promises that He will once again establish righteousness and friendship between Himself, the Woman, and her Seed. [\[153\]](#)

Identifying the Characters

But who is the Woman and who is her seed? The best way to answer this question is to first identify the more easily recognizable characters in Genesis 3:15. Once we do that, we will have additional data that we can use to identify the remaining characters.

The Serpent

The Serpent is the most easily identifiable character. Scripture elsewhere explicitly states that the Serpent is the Devil or Satan. For example:

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

"And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world..." (Revelation 12:9).

"He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, which is the Devil or Satan..." (Revelation 20:2).

Whoever sins belongs to the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning. Indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

Conservative Protestants and Catholics are in agreement here. [\[154\]](#)

"Her Seed"

If the Serpent is the Devil or Satan, then we can more easily identify our second character, the Woman's Seed. Who is this Seed?

There are a few candidates that can be dismissed without much trouble. Adam, for example, cannot be the Woman's Seed because God created Adam from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7), not from the Woman. [\[155\]](#) Indeed, God calling Adam "the Woman's Seed" really doesn't make sense. Therefore, this Seed must be someone other than Adam.

Moreover, the Woman's Seed, according to Genesis 3:15, crushes or strikes the head of the Serpent, which, as we shall see later, means that he will defeat the Devil. Adam

never subdued or defeated the Devil. On the contrary, Adam remained at enmity with God and subject to the Devil for the rest of his life. Adam just doesn't fit the job description. Who, then, is the Woman's Seed?

Let us look at the second half of Genesis 3:15 for more clues about the Seed's identity:

"He [the Woman's Seed] shall bruise you [the Serpent] on the head, And you [Serpent] shall bruise him [the Woman's Seed] on the heel."

Scripture says that "he will bruise..." The use of a singular, masculine, pronoun indicates that the promised seed will be a single male. [\[156\]](#) Although some manuscripts have the neuter pronoun "it" or the feminine pronoun "she," these manuscripts are late and are in the minority. The singular, masculine, pronoun "he" is the preferred reading.

Also, the Hebrew text uses the same root word (šûp) for both striking the heel and the head. The meaning of this word ranges from bruising something to crushing it. [\[157\]](#) What decides its meaning is the object that is being struck. If someone bruised or crushed a heel, the person would be in pain for a while, but his life would not be in danger. But if someone were to bruise or crush someone's head, that wound could well be fatal. At the very least, it would be a serious wound. [\[158\]](#)

Scripture also uses head crushing as a metaphor for being victorious over God's enemies. For example, the Psalms tell us:

"Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies, The hairy crown of him who goes on in his guilty deeds" (Psalms 68:21).

"You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the sea monsters in the waters. You crushed the heads of Leviathan; You gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness" (Psalms 74:13-14).

Head wounds can incapacitate, divest a creature of its power, or even kill.

A blow to the head of a Serpent can be even more deadly since the power of a serpent is its head (cf. Revelation 9:19). This is why snake handlers always pick up serpents by their head and never by their tails. To control the serpent's head is to control the serpent and greatly reduce the chances of getting bitten. [\[159\]](#) A blow to a serpent's head would take away or even destroy his destructive power.

Since the Serpent of Genesis is not merely a snake, but the Devil or Satan, the blow from the Woman's Seed surely means a definitive destruction of the power of the Devil and not a minor wound. The Woman's Seed crushes the head of the Serpent, and does not just strike it.

Who then is the Woman's Seed? Who conquers the Devil and destroys his power? He is Jesus Christ. He alone crushes the head of the Serpent through His life, death, and

resurrection (John 12:31-33; 16:11, 1 Corinthians 15:22-26, Hebrews 2:14, and 1 John 3:8).[\[160\]](#)

The Virgin Birth

The Serpent is the Devil and the Woman's Seed is Jesus. Genesis 3:15 may also contain a prophecy of the Virgin Birth.

Genesis 3:15 identifies the promised "Seed" that will crush the head of the Serpent exclusively with His mother. He is the Woman's "seed" (Greek, sperma). Scripture normally speaks of someone as the "seed" of his father, not of his mother. Yet, God here breaks convention and refers only to the promised conqueror as the Woman's Seed.[\[161\]](#) Later messianic prophecies also identify the Messiah exclusively with his mother (that is, without a human male progenitor):

"Therefore, He will give them up, until the time When she who is labor has borne a child, Then the remainder of his brethren will return to the sons of Israel" (Micah 5:3-4 [2-3]).[\[162\]](#)

"How long will you go here and there, O faithless daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth. A woman will encompass a man" (Jeremiah 31:22).[\[163\]](#)

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).[\[164\]](#)

Only Jesus Christ crushes the head of the Serpent and is solely identified with His mother, being conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:34-35) and born of the Virgin Mary (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23). Paul wrote:

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law..." (Galatians 4:4).[\[165\]](#)

These prophecies show, like Genesis 3:15, an exclusive relationship of the Messiah with His mother. The early Christian writers recognized in Genesis 3:15 a prophecy of the Virgin Birth as well.[\[166\]](#)

"Her Seed" will be Bruised or Crushed

Our identification of Jesus Christ as the Woman's Seed becomes even stronger when we consider that the Serpent will strike the heel of the Woman's Seed, since striking one's heel denotes some sort of injury.[\[167\]](#)

Christ, no doubt, fulfills this striking-of-the-heel prophecy in His passion and crucifixion. To those who were seeking His life, Jesus said:

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in

him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44-45).

The Devil was a murderer from the beginning. Those who were seeking to kill Jesus, therefore, fulfilled the Devil’s desires. Their work was striking at the Messiah’s heel.

Jesus must be the primary, literal, historical fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. He alone crushes the Serpent’s head through his life, death, and resurrection. Those who followed the Devil’s desires afflicted Jesus and figuratively struck His heel. Moreover, Christ alone is uniquely the Woman’s Seed because of the Virgin Birth. Having no earthly father, Jesus received His humanity entirely from His mother, thus making Him truly “Her Seed.”

The Seed of the Serpent

The next character is a little harder to identify. Who or what is the Serpent’s seed? There are several of possibilities.

One possibility is that all the wicked are represented as the Serpent’s seed. The New Testament seems to affirm this when Our Lord calls the wicked the children of their father, the Devil (John 8:44).

If these wicked people had the Devil for their father, they must be his “seed.” [\[168\]](#) Jesus certainly didn’t mean that these wicked men were the physical spawn of Satan, but rather that they carry out the desires of the Devil since he was a murderer and a liar “from the beginning.”

1 John 3:8-10 also identifies the wicked as the children of the devil:

“... [T]he one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil...By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”

Another possibility is that all demons or fallen angels are the Serpent’s seed since the New Testament sometimes identifies them as the Devil’s angels (Matthew 25:41, Revelation 12:9). Like the wicked humans mentioned above, they too follow the Devil’s desires.

The Serpent’s seed could also be the anti-Christ. He will appear at the end of time to oppose Christ, but will, in the end, be defeated by God (Luke 21:8, 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Revelation 19:20, 20:10, 15).

The early Christian writers were divided among these three possibilities. For our purposes, we do not need to choose one over the other. Indeed, all three identities could be true. For example, the Serpent’s seed could be all wicked humans and the demons who tempt them, culminating at the end of time with the arrival of the wicked one, the

Anti-Christ.

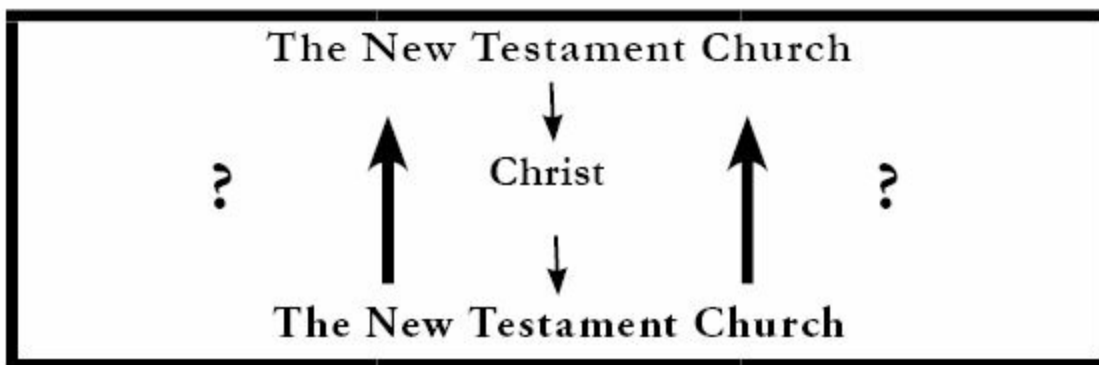
Identifying the Woman

There are several candidates for the Woman of Genesis 3:15. The Woman could be Adam's wife, Eve, or the Virgin Mary. Perhaps, she could be a symbol for a group, such as the Old Testament Church, the New Testament Church, all women, or the Elect. Which candidate best fits the First Gospel, subsequent messianic prophecies, and the views of the early Christian writers? Who or what is the literal, historical fulfillment of the Woman? Let us examine each candidate.

The Woman as the New Testament Church

Could the Woman be a symbol for the New Testament Church? If such were the case, it would create a horrible anachronism. If the promised Seed of Genesis 3:15 is Jesus, then the "Seed" cannot be the New Testament Church (Figure 2). For Christ makes the Church possible, not the other way around. Even more, Scripture affirms the Church is the "body of Christ." [\[169\]](#) Therefore, the New Testament Church cannot be the Woman.

Figure 2

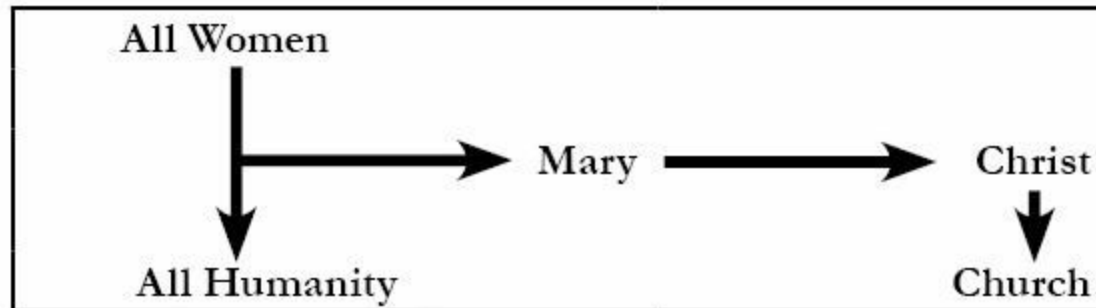


The Woman as a Symbol for All Women

Equally problematic is that the Woman is a symbol for all women. Again, if Jesus were the Woman's Seed, then He would be the "Seed" of all women (Figure 3). Yet, all women did not give birth to the Messiah, literally or symbolically, not unless Mary is a representative figure for all women. If this is true, then Mary would be the primary fulfillment of the Woman, with all women being included in a secondary sense. Mary would be a symbol for all women.

Besides, God promised in the First Gospel to place enmity between the Woman and the Serpent. If the Woman is a symbol for all women, then God put enmity between all women and the Devil, which did not happen. Some women are wicked. The Woman of Genesis 3:15 is distinct from the Serpent's seed. So then, the Woman cannot be a symbol for all women.

Figure 3



The Woman as a Symbol of the Old Testament Church

Could the Woman symbolize the Old Testament Church or the synagogue? After all, Jesus was a Jew born “under the law” (Galatians 4:4). Perhaps He was the “seed” of the Old Testament Church.

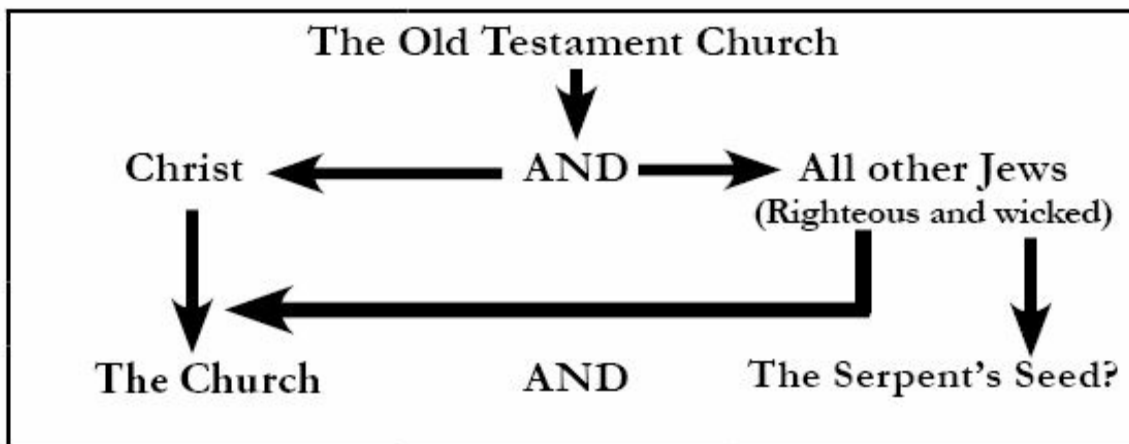
A couple of significant difficulties immediately arise. God promised to put enmity between the Woman and the Serpent (Devil). This would mean that the Old Testament Church would be at enmity or hostility with the Serpent (Devil). We know, however, that some members of the Old Testament Church were wicked and were therefore included among the Serpent’s seed (Matthew 3:7, John 8:44-45, 1 John 3:10-12). So then, both the righteous and the wicked (the Serpent’s seed?) would make up the Old Testament Church. Yet, how could this be? The First Gospel clearly distinguishes between the Woman and the Serpent’s seed and places them in opposition to each other.

Another difficulty concerns the relationship of the Old Testament Church to God. Friendship with God and friendship with the Serpent are mutually exclusive. One cannot be the friend of one without being hostile to the other. If God did put enmity between the Old Testament Church and the Devil this would mean that the Old Testament Church, as a corporate body, was in God’s grace or favor. However, the corporate reconciliation with God did not take place in the Old Testament Church. It took place in the New Covenant (Figure 4). It would then be better to speak of the Woman being the New Testament Church. However, we have already determined that that the New Testament Church cannot be the Woman.

If the Woman were the Old Testament Church, it would also seriously compromise the First Gospel as a prophecy. For prophecy to function as prophecy it needs to provide

enough information so its fulfillment can be known. The Old Testament Church is simply too general to supply such relevant information. All it would “reveal” was that the Jewish Messiah would be Jewish. Not only would this be superfluous, but it would also be useless since all Jews, like Jesus, could be the “Seed” of the Woman since they too were “born under the law.” The First Gospel suggests something unique, a relationship between the Woman and Jesus that is unlike any other.

Figure 4



The Woman as a Symbol of the Elect

Could the Woman be a symbol for all the Elect?[\[170\]](#) Unlike the Old Testament Church, the Elect are, at least at death, righteous and in opposition to the Devil.

Unfortunately, that the Woman symbolizes the Elect makes an even worse candidate than those we have already considered. For instance, we immediately run into a problem with meaning. If the Woman symbolizes all the Elect, then what would it mean for Jesus to be the “Seed” of the Elect? Do the Elect have offspring or seed? Besides, how could all the Elect have Jesus as their Seed? Such questions are too strange for serious consideration.

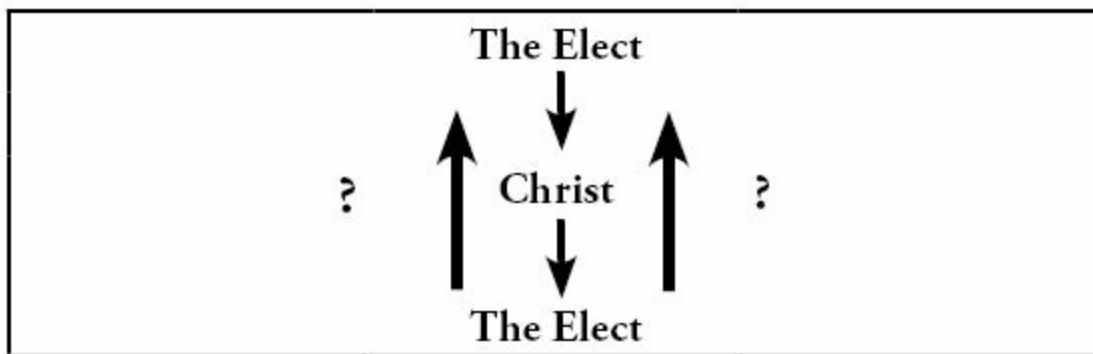
Anachronism is another problem. The Elect didn’t bring forth or give birth to Christ, God chose the Elect in Christ from the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). All the Elect would be the “offspring” of Jesus, if we could use such language, not the other way around (Figure 5).

Perhaps the Woman is a symbol of an elect person and not a group? Would that solve our

difficulties? If the Woman were a symbol of an Elect person, who would that person be? Certainly, the closest person to symbolize the mother of the Promised Seed would be the actual mother of Christ, Mary. If this is so, why not simply say that Mary is the Woman?

If the Woman were all the Elect, we would also have a problem distinguishing the Elect from the non-elect. Who are the Elect of the Old Testament? Unless God identifies them, how can we know? If we cannot clearly identify which elect are included in the Woman, how then can we identify Her Seed?

Figure 5



Even more, the idea of the Woman being all the Elect is foreign to the context of the First Gospel. The first three chapters of Genesis do not mention divine election. When all these things are considered, the Woman being a corporate symbol of all of the Elect creates far more problems than it solves.

The Woman a Symbol for Eve

How about Adam's wife, Eve? Could she be the primary, literal, historical fulfillment of the Woman? There are several Ostrong points that favor this interpretation. For example, Eve is the only female mentioned in Genesis before the First Gospel, making her the most natural candidate for the Woman. Adam also named his wife "Woman" (Hebrew, *ishah*) in Genesis 2:23, the same word Genesis 3:15 uses for the Seed's mother. Eve also played a role in the Fall. It would not be reasonable to assume that she would also have a role in the promise of the restoration.

Although these points are strong, they are not as solid as they first appear. It is true that Eve is the only female mentioned before Genesis 3:15. However, the First Gospel makes up a prophetic segment, which builds on what has already happened and points to a future event. [\[171\]](#) Since the First Gospel points forward to the future, the promised Woman does not necessarily have to be the same female mentioned in the preceding context. She could be a future female, just as Her Seed is a future male.

Eve's name is a less formidable obstacle. Although the name of Adam's wife and the Woman are both the same (*ishah*), the word is quite general and it can apply to any

female. But “Woman” was only a temporary name. In Genesis 3:20, Adam changed it to Eve immediately after God pronounced judgment. If Eve was the promised Woman of Genesis 3:15, why would Adam change her name so that it no longer matched the female mentioned in God’s promise? This name change may indicate that Eve was not the Woman of Genesis 3:15.

In regards to the propriety of Eve being included in the promised restoration, the opposite seems to be true. Adam’s sin, not Eve’s, brought about the Fall of mankind. Since Adam is absent in the First Gospel (since he is neither the Woman nor Her Seed), Eve’s inclusion is all the more improper for the First Gospel. If either of them were to be included, Adam, not Eve, would be the most fitting choice.

Eve and the Enmity

Other difficulties abound if the Woman symbolizes Eve. If the Woman is Eve and God has promised to put enmity between the Woman (Eve) and the Devil, He must have fulfilled this promise during Eve’s lifetime, but where in Genesis 4 does God fulfill this promise? [\[172\]](#) Where does God restore friendship with Eve so as to put her at enmity with the Devil? There is not even a hint of this restoration in any of the few texts that mention her (Genesis 4:1-2, 25). As far as the early Christian and Jewish writers were concerned, Eve remained estranged from God through sin until her death.

The timing of the First Gospel also suggests that Eve is not the Woman. God gives the Good News of the Redemption in Genesis 3:15, but then follows it with punishments or curses for Eve and her female descendants (Genesis 3:16). If Eve was the promised Woman, the punishments should have come first so that Eve would have been consoled by God’s promise that she would one day play a role in the restoration. But by giving the Good News first, only to follow it with Eve’s punishments, the text suggests that she may not have been the Woman of the First Gospel.

There is also the difficulty of identifying Christ with Eve. The First Gospel identifies the promised Seed only with His mother. He is Her Seed. If Eve is the Woman then in what sense is Jesus uniquely Her Seed, and not the Seed of anyone else? Eve is the mother of all the living (Genesis 3:20); all of humanity are her descendants. [\[173\]](#) Therefore, it is difficult to see how Jesus could claim any exclusive or unique relationship to Eve that no other human could also claim. Earlier, we rejected candidates (such as the Old Testament Church and all women) because the information they supplied concerning the Messiah was either redundant or superfluous. The only thing Eve would reveal about “Her Seed” would be that the Messiah would be human! What could be more superfluous than that?

Is Jesus the offspring of Eve or Adam? Adam is the father all of Eve’s offspring and Luke’s genealogy traces Jesus’ family line back to Adam, not Eve (Luke 3:38). If Eve is the Woman of Genesis 3:15, shouldn’t Luke have traced Jesus’ genealogy back to Eve instead of Adam? After all, He would be Her Seed.

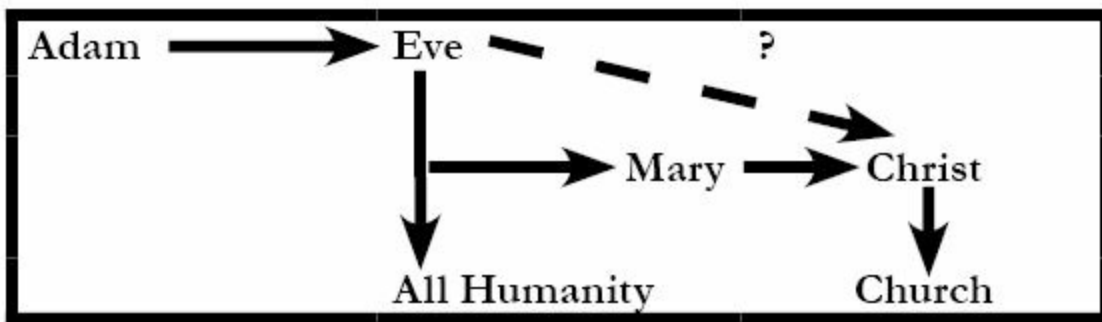
Eve would also create an enormous gap of time between the Woman and Her Seed. There is nothing in the First Gospel to support such an enormous gap. The natural reading of the First Gospel supposes the Woman's Seed to be her immediate child, not some distant ancestor.

Proposing such a remote maternal figure for the Messiah places the First Gospel out of sync with the later prophecies about the Messiah and His mother. No other prophecy makes such a remote connection.^[174] They speak only of the Messiah's real and actual immediate mother, Mary. If Eve is the Woman, why are there no prophetic echoes confirming this prophesy?

Furthermore, what did Eve contribute to Christ to make Him uniquely "Her Seed" (Figure 6)? All of Eve's children are by nature "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). She only gave her children a fallen human nature, but Jesus is sinless! Only in a distant and indirect sense can we say that Eve contributed anything towards Redemption. How could Eve, in such a restrictive sense, be qualified to be the Woman and Christ to be Her Seed.

Figure 6

If



Jesus were in anyway Eve's Seed, He would be Her Seed as she was before the Fall, before sin entered the world, when she was called Woman, because Jesus is sinless. However, Eve was a virgin before the Fall and did not have children until after Adam sinned (Genesis 4:1).

Given all these problems and difficulties, it can be said with some certainty that Eve cannot be the Woman of the First Gospel.

The Woman and Mary

Although each candidate showed some promising signs, they all fall short of being the primary, historical, and literal fulfillment of the Woman of Genesis 3:15. Only one candidate remains, the Virgin Mary. When we compare Mary to the earlier possibilities, her strengths for being the Woman immediately become evident.

No Gap

Unlike Eve, Mary does not force us to account for an enormous gap of time between the

Woman and Her Seed. Mary is Jesus' mother, proximate and literal, which fits the most natural reading of the First Gospel.

Since Mary is Jesus' mother, she would also bring the First Gospel in line with the other prophecies of the Messiah and His mother, for they all apply to the Messiah's actual mother, Mary. [\[175\]](#) Indeed, these subsequent prophecies are echoes and amplifications of the First Gospel.

The Virgin Birth

Mary also fulfills the prophecy of the Woman having a "Seed." As we mentioned earlier, the Messiah is the Woman's Seed (Greek, sperma), which suggests that He is not the "seed" of Adam or some other male, but somehow only of His mother. This points forward to the Virgin Birth. If the First Gospel is a prophecy of the Virgin Birth, as several early Christian writers believed, then Mary and no other must be the Woman.

Friendship and Enmity Appears

In regards to the enmity with the Devil, Mary also fits. Unlike some of the other candidates whose restoration to God's favor (i.e., being at enmity with the Devil) was either impossible (e.g., the Old Testament Church and all women) or doubtful (Eve), we know that God did extend His grace to Mary even before the angel Gabriel announced the Good News:

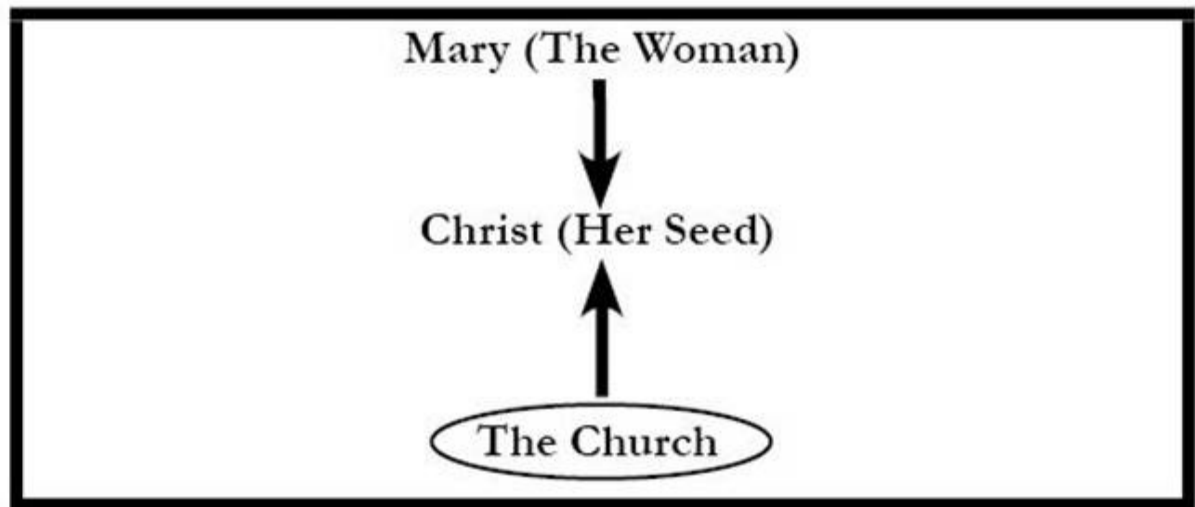
"And coming in, he [Gabriel] said to her [Mary], 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you...' 'The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God'" (Luke 1:28, 30). [\[176\]](#)

Since Mary (or any other person, for that matter) could not make herself acceptable to God or justify herself, God then must have intervened. That means even before Gabriel appeared God brought Mary into His favor (and into enmity with the Devil). Is this not what the First Gospel promised: "I will put enmity between you [Serpent] and the Woman"?

Unique Relationship

Although it is difficult to understand how Christ could be the unique "Seed" of the other candidates, Mary's relationship to Christ is straightforward. Christ is uniquely Mary's son because of the Virgin Birth (Figure 7). Mary is Jesus' sole human progenitor or parent. No other human, since God created Eve from Adam, can make such a claim. This is why Christ is most truly Mary's Seed.

Figure 7



A Mother Called Woman

Adam called his wife “Woman.” Mary was also called “Woman,” but in a more significant way, for it was her son, Jesus, who called her “Woman.” At first glance, this may not seem very significant. After all, it was common in the ancient Middle East for a male to address a female as “woman.” In John’s Gospel, for example, Jesus addressed a female as “woman” three times (John 4:21, 8:10, and 20:15). [\[177\]](#) Why then is Jesus’ calling Mary “Woman” of any significance?

Quite frankly, it is unprecedented. There is no record anywhere in all of ancient literature of the son ever calling his mother “Woman.” [\[178\]](#) It was unheard of until Jesus called His mother “Woman” in the Gospel of John! Even more, Jesus did this, not once, but twice, in two very important junctures in His public ministry, at the wedding in Cana (John 2:4) and from the Cross (John 19:26).

These two events will be explained in greater detail later in the book. For now, we will simply point out a possible connection between the cross and the First Gospel. Jesus was crucified on a hill named Golgotha, which means “the place of the skull.” The name and meaning of this name has some importance since all four Evangelists take the time to carefully record it (Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22, Luke 23:33, John 19:17). Why was Jesus crucified on “the place of the skull”? Could it be that this was the place where the Woman’s Seed crushes the “head” of the Serpent? [\[179\]](#) Or is it just coincidence?

Notice how when all the elements of the first Gospel are put together, a tapestry of images forms. The New Adam and a tree (the Cross) is atop a hill called “the place of the skull.” At that hour, John tells us, the ruler of this world, the Devil, is cast out (John 12:32-

33). We also have the Messiah, the Woman's Seed, calling His mother, "Woman."

The singularity of Jesus' address to His mother, and the contexts in which they took place, compel us to look for a deeper biblical meaning. What is the deeper meaning? That Jesus is the promised Seed and that Mary is the Woman.

The Woman of Galatians 4:4

We should also notice that Paul refers to Mary as "Woman" in Galatians 4:4:

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law."

Paul's words also provide a couple of tantalizing pointers to the First Gospel. For example, Paul called Mary "woman" when he was speaking of God's unfolding plan of Redemption at a "set date" (Galatians 4:2), with Christ coming in the "fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4). This suggests that being "born of a woman" fulfills an Old Testament prophecy. Paul described Jesus' birth as being "made" (Greek, egeneto) of the woman. This is the same Greek word that Paul elsewhere uses to describe the creation of Adam.

"So also it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became (egeneto) a living soul.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45). [\[180\]](#)

When Paul wrote, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born [made] of a woman..." was he alluding to the First Gospel? We cannot say for certain.

God's Perfect Plan of Redemption

God's perfect plan of Redemption also connects Mary with the Woman of the First Gospel. In the previous chapter, we saw how God's perfect victory over Satan despoiled him of everything that he had achieved in the Fall through both sexes, a New Adam (Christ) and a New Eve (Mary). Genesis 3:15 is where God's perfect plan of Redemption is promised with the Woman and Her Seed. Since Mary is undoubtedly the New Eve, she must also be the promised Woman.

Christian Witness

Did the early Christian writers believe Mary was the Woman of the First Gospel? Dominic Unger, in his comprehensive study of quotes and allusions to the First Gospel, notes that nearly all the early Christian writers who commented on or alluded to the First Gospel identified Mary as the New Eve and/or the literal historical fulfillment of the Woman in Genesis 3:15. [\[181\]](#) The few writers who interpreted the Woman as someone or something else, did so because they were interpreting the text as an allegory (and not according to the literal sense) or they had adapted the text to fit a moral lesson they were making. [\[182\]](#)

Only Mary is uniquely qualified to be the Woman of Genesis 3:15:

- 1) Mary is the Messiah's actual mother.*
- 2) If the First Gospel foretold the Virgin Birth, then the Woman must be Mary. Only the Virgin Mary gave birth to Christ.*
- 3) Only Mary's child is fully at enmity with the Devil.*
- 4) Mary was in God's favor or grace (and so at enmity with the Devil) before the angel approached her. This affirms the First Gospel's description of the Woman being at enmity with the Serpent (Devil).*
- 5) At two different times, Jesus addressed His mother as "Woman," an address without precedent in ancient literature.*
- 6) God used both sexes (Jesus and Mary) in His perfect plan of redemption. Therefore, the two sexes prophesied in regards to the redemption must also be Jesus and Mary.*
- 7) Other prophecies about the Messiah's mother (e.g., Isaiah 7:14, and others) speak only to the Messiah's immediate mother, Mary. If Mary is the Woman of Genesis 3:15, the First Gospel fits perfectly into this prophetic stream.*
- 8) The early Christians writers who interpreted Genesis 3:15 literally and without accommodation understood the Woman to be Mary, either explicitly or implicitly.*
- 9) Although other candidates, in a secondary sense, can be the Woman in Genesis 3:15 (perhaps typologically, allegorically, or metaphorically), only Mary satisfies the primary, literal, historical fulfillment of the Woman of Genesis 3:15. All others fall short in some respect.*
- 10) If Jesus is the promised Seed, then Mary is the most natural fulfillment of the Seed's mother. It is as straightforward as that.*

Whatever merits the other candidates enjoyed, Mary is the most plausible primary, literal, historical, fulfillment of the Woman.

A Closer Look at Genesis 3:15

Now that we have identified all the characters of the First Gospel, we now examine the First Gospel, line by line, to see what its overall structure can tell us about the Virgin Mary.

I will put enmity...

God promised that He would put enmity (hostility, warfare) between the various parties of Genesis 3:15. What is this enmity? And did God put one, or more than one, enmity between the different parties?

The text of Genesis shows that God put a single enmity between each of the parties involved. Otherwise, Genesis 3:15 would have read:

"And I [God] will put enmity between [the Serpent] and the Woman and I will put enmity between [the Serpent's] seed and [the Woman's] Seed..."

Enmity is used once and it is applied to the various parties, as the following structure shows:

*And I [God] will put **enmity***

***between** [the Serpent] and the Woman,*

and

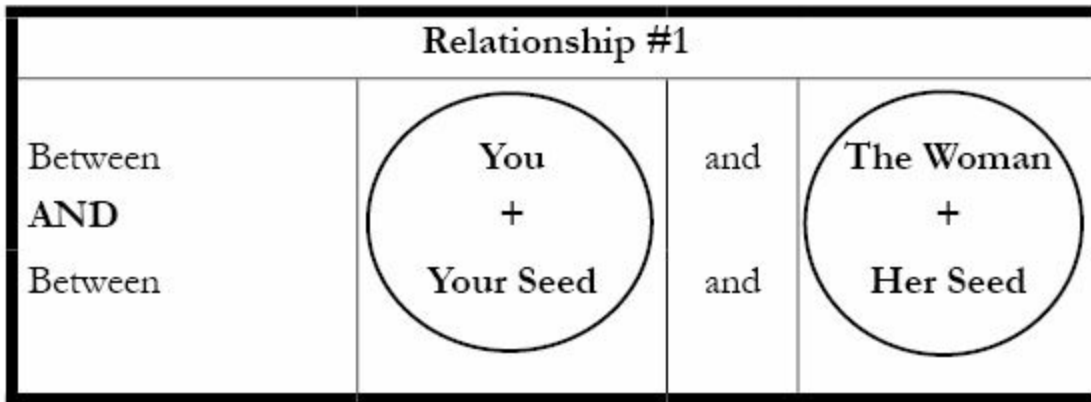
***between** [the Serpent's] seed and [the Woman's] Seed...[\[183\]](#)*

By applying the same enmity to the different parties, the verse forms a distinct structure in which we can distinguish two different relationships.

Relationship #1 – God's Alliance versus the Devil's Alliance

The first relationship focuses on whom or what God has put enmity between (See Relationship #1 below). God's enmity divides those being prophesied into two pairs. Each pair consists of a parent or progenitor (the Serpent, the Woman) and an offspring. Each offspring identified with a reference to his parent or progenitor (e.g., the "Your seed" and "Her Seed").

It is difficult for us to discover the exact relationship between the first pair (the Serpent and his seed) because the identity of the Serpent's seed is open to a number of



possibilities. They may be joined together because they share a physical likeness (both are fallen angels) or a moral likeness, doing similar deeds and working towards a shared goal. However, the relationship between the second pair, the Woman (Mary) and Her Seed (Christ), is clearer; most probably is a reference to the Virgin Birth. Christ received the totality of His human nature, through the power of the Holy Spirit, from His mother. That makes Him to be her Seed.

Relationship #1 shows us that each pair was allied in battle against the other pair. We see that Relationship #1 mirrors what we have earlier seen in Genesis 2 and 3. Adam and his wife were allied and united in a covenant with God (and at enmity with the Devil). However, through the Serpent's actions, the pair switched loyalties and allied themselves in the Devil's rebellion.

The First Gospel promises that God will introduce enmity, not between our first parents and the Serpent, but between a new allied couple, the Woman and Her Seed. [\[184\]](#) They will be a New Adam and a New Eve. God will make sure that their loyalties will not break and that their new alliance will triumph over the Enemy.

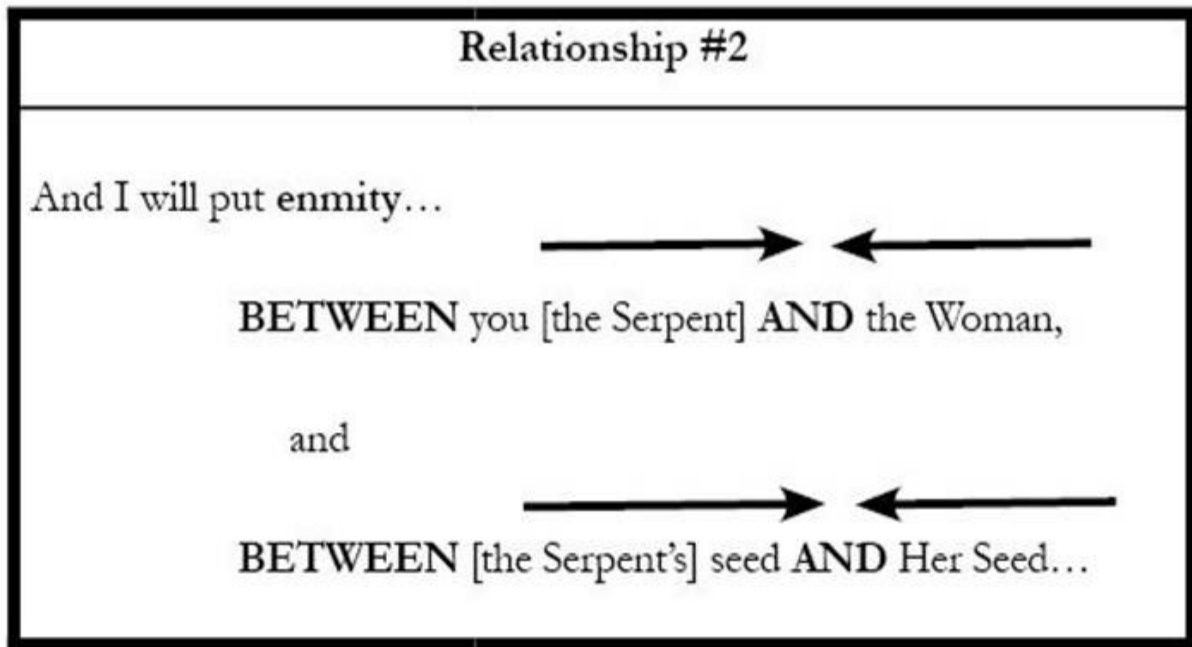
Relationship #2 – Parallel Enmity

The structure of the First Gospel also has a second relationship. This second relationship focuses on the coordinating conjunction ("and") that separates the two members of each alliance. When viewed from this perspective, we find that the enmity God placed is applied in parallel between each member of both alliances. This means that the Serpent is at enmity with the Woman and the Serpent's seed is at enmity with Her Seed (See Relationship #2 below).

The symmetry of Relationship #2 shows us that the enmity, which exists between one pair, also exists with the other.

Nature and Extent of the Enmity

What exactly is the enmity, hostility, or warfare that God will introduce? Is it perfect or imperfect? Is it absolute or relative? When did it begin? Does it ever end?



We can answer these questions by examining the one pair that we know most about, the state of enmity between the Woman's Seed (Christ) and the Serpent's seed (the wicked, demons, the Anti-Christ, etc.). Was there ever a time or even a moment when Christ was the friend of the Devil or the wicked so as to be at enmity with God the Father? The answer is obvious. No. Christ is always in friendship with the Father: He never sinned (Hebrews 1:9, 4:15, John 8:46, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and 1 Peter 2:22). Therefore, the state of enmity that exists between Christ and the Devil's seed must be complete and perfect.

When did this enmity begin? Here we need to be precise. Was Christ's enmity with the Devil eternal in virtue of the fact that Christ is God? Christ could not be eternally at enmity with the Devil because God obviously existed before He created the angels. Moreover, Satan was created good. It was only after the Devil sinned and fell that enmity began to exist between him and God. But this is something different than what is found in Genesis 3:15.

Satan created enmity by sinning, but the enmity of Genesis is something God places or puts into effect. Therefore, the enmity of Genesis 3:15 does not refer to the enmity that Satan had with Christ before the Incarnation, most likely God introduces a new type of enmity at the Incarnation, where God creates a new human will in Christ that is completely obedient to the divine will. It is a human will that the Devil cannot sway into sin. [\[185\]](#)

This New Adam, like the first, from the first moment of his human existence, was in fellowship with God and at enmity with the Devil and his seed. Unlike Adam's, however, Christ's enmity with the Devil never changed, but remained perfect.

What does this tell us about Mary?

God did not say, “I will put enmity between you [Serpent] and the Woman and I will put enmity between your seed and Her Seed” as if there were two different enmities. He said “I will put enmity between you [Serpent] and the Woman and between your seed and Her Seed.” This structure shows that God introduces a single enmity which is distributed between the two parallel parties. This parallelism shows that whatever exists between one pair must also exist in the other pair as well (See diagram of Relationship #2 above). Since we know that Jesus was at enmity with the Serpent’s Seed from the first moment of his earthly existence (i.e., conception), the same must exist for the Woman as well, so that, from the first moment of her conception, Mary, like the Woman in Genesis, was created in a state of friendship with God and at enmity with the Devil. [\[186\]](#)

Unlike Adam and Eve who were created in God’s favor and later became at enmity with God being friends with the Devil, God will put enmity so that the new Adam and the New Eve would always remain in God’s favor and always be at enmity with the Devil from the first moment of their existence onwards. [\[187\]](#)

Tale of Two Kingdoms

Earlier, we saw how the First Gospel and the language surrounding it points to the establishment of a kingdom and a dominion. Scripture applies some of this language to the Davidic monarchy. [\[188\]](#) With this background in mind, we see that the two relationships of the First Gospel are really describing two kingdoms in conflict.

The Fall brought about a change in dominion. Instead of Adam filling the earth with righteous offspring, he and his wife fill the earth with fallen humanity, subject to sin, death, and the Devil (Romans 5:12, Hebrews 2:15). The Devil had become the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31, 16:11, Ephesians 6:12) possessing the kingdoms of the earth (Matthew 4:9, 12:26, Luke 4:5-6, 11:18). The First Gospel promises God’s response.

The two allied pairs of the First Gospel represent two kingdoms: The kingdom of God (the Woman and Her Seed) will be at war with the Kingdom of the Devil (the Serpent and his seed). The kingdom of God will prevail when the Woman’s Seed crushes the head of the Serpent. [\[189\]](#)

The first Gospel prophesies of the coming of this Kingdom, but what sign will there be that God’s Kingdom is at hand? What is the sign that this prophecy is about to be fulfilled? The sign will be the appearance of the promised Woman and Her Seed.

In Summary

** Genesis 3:15 is the first Good News (Protoevangelium) or first prophecy in Scripture of the Messiah.*

** God promises that He will put enmity or warfare between the Serpent and the Woman, and the Serpent’s Seed and the Woman’s seed. The Serpent’s seed will strike the heel of*

the Woman's Seed and the Woman's Seed will strike the head of the Serpent's seed.

** Genesis 3:15 speaks of four figures (i.e., the Serpent, the Woman, the Serpent's seed, the Woman's seed). The Serpent is the Devil or Satan (John 8:44, Revelation 12:9, 20:9, 1 John 3:8). Christ is the Woman's Seed, who crushes the head of the Devil (John 12:31; 16:11, 1 Corinthians 15:22-26, Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8). The seed of the Devil can be demons, wicked people, the anti-Christ, or all three.*

** Several candidates can be ruled out of contention for being the primary, literal, historic fulfillment of the Woman. The Woman can neither be Eve nor a symbol of the New or Old Testament Church, all women, or the Elect. The Virgin Mary provides the best fit for the Woman as described in the First Gospel.*

** The structure of Genesis 3:15 reveals two different relationships between the various parties.*

** Relationship #1 focuses on how enmity divides these characters into two pairs. This relationship shows that there are two alliances in opposition to each other. The Woman and Her Seed is at enmity with the Serpent (Devil) and his seed.*

** Unlike the Fall, where our first parents' friendship and loyalties changed and joined the Serpent in rebellion against God, God promises that He will form a new and indefectible alliance of friendship (enmity with the Devil), which will be victorious over the Devil through the actions of the Promised Seed.*

** Relationship #2 focuses on how the single enmity is distributed in parallel between each member of each alliance. The enmity that exists between the Woman and the Devil is also the same enmity that exists between the Devil's seed and the Woman's Seed.*

** Since the one enmity exists in parallel between both parties, it follows that the same enmity that exists within one party must also exist within the other.*

** Christ's enmity with the Serpent (Devil) is absolute (He never sinned) and it existed from the first moment of His earthly existence (conception) onwards. The parallel of Genesis 3:15 indicates that the same enmity also existed in the Woman, Mary. It also was absolute and it extended from conception onwards.*

** The First Gospel prophesied Christ's victory over the Devil (crushing the Devil's head). There will be a change in kingship or dominion. Adam was to have dominion over the earth, but the Fall had usurped his reign. The First Gospel promises that God will end the Devil's reign under a new King, the New Adam.*

** What is the sign that this prophecy is about to be fulfilled? The sign will be the appearance of the promised Woman and Her Seed.*

Chapter 5 The Promised Sign

Why is it that Catholics make such a fuss about Mary? Catholic homes and churches are filled with pictures and statues of Mary. Catholicism has distinctly Marian devotions such as the rosary and chaplets. Some Catholics even have Mary statues on their front lawns! Isn't all this attention misplaced? If Christ has won the victory over sin, death, and the Devil, shouldn't Christ alone be on center stage?

Catholics do make much of Mary. But they do so only because she points us to Jesus. In the ancient Church, when Greek was still the primary language, Christians called Mary Hodegetria, "the one who points the way," the one who points to Christ.

Consider the following. Let's say that there was a prophecy in the Old Testament in which God promised that a majestic oak tree would spring up in the middle of Jerusalem when the Messiah was born. When Jesus was born, the promised oak tree appeared, just as prophesied. Do you think Christians would be excited about the oak tree that appeared? You bet they would! Paintings, pictures, and statues of that promised oak tree would fill Christian churches and homes. Symbols of that oak would be affixed to anything associated with Christianity. And, I would guess, not a few Protestant homes would plant oak trees in their front yards!

What would a new Christian, who didn't fully grasp the significance of the appearance of the promised oak tree, say about all these decorations? He probably would say, "You're putting too much emphasis on oak trees. Forget about them! We should focus only on Christ."

An elder of the Church would likely take a few moments to explain how the oak tree was a sign promised by God to confirm the coming Messiah. For centuries, generations had eagerly waited for the tree to sprout. Then the promised was fulfilled at Christ's birth showing that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Now, the oak tree is heralded throughout the world because it affirms that Jesus is the Christ.

Catholics do make much of Mary because she, much like the tree in our story, is the promised sign which affirms that Jesus is the true Messiah. Indeed, Mary is the promised sign of the Kingdom's restoration.

In the last chapter, we saw how God promised, in Genesis 3:15, that He would re-establish His dominion over the earth through the New Adam. The sign which reveals that this promise has begun to be fulfilled is the arrival of the Woman and Her Seed. Further on in Scripture, we find that the promised Seed is also the Son of David, who will restore the Davidic Kingdom. Mary is the sign that God's kingdom has come.

To understand more fully how Mary is that promised sign, we must first gain a better understanding of Christ as the Son of David and the Messianic King.

The Kingdom of David

Long before David and the monarchy, God prophesied that the royal scepter would never leave Judah (Genesis 49:10). This meant that in some way the kingship would come from the tribe of Judah and would reign forever. Later, God allowed the Jews to have a monarchy with Saul as their first King, but Saul fell into disgrace. As a result, David became King. Because of David's sincere devotion to God, the Almighty promised David that his lineal kingship would never perish:

"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Samuel 7:12-13).

David ruled as king over the twelve tribes of Israel. Not long after God promised that David's descendants would rule on his throne forever, David died and his son Solomon ascended to the throne followed by David's grandson, Rehoboam. It was under his reign that the ten northern tribes separated from Judah and Benjamin in the south (1 Kings 12:16-17). The rebellious northern tribes installed their own king and established their own line of succession. The northern tribes became wicked and the Assyrians would later conquer these tribes and carry them off into exile (2 Kings 17:1-7). As a result, the ten northern tribes intermarried with non-Jews and were scattered to the four corners of the earth.

The southern kingdom also turned from the Lord. The Babylonians eventually overran the southern kingdom and exiled its people (2 Kings 25:1-11). The members of the southern kingdom sought to return 70 years later, only to find the land impoverished and desolate.

The kingdom of David appeared to be at an end. The ten northern tribes had vanished. The Babylonians had destroyed the Jerusalem Temple where the Ark of the Covenant and God's glorious presence once resided. The Davidic monarchy seemed to be drawing to a close.

Yet even before this disaster occurred, God reassured His people that when everything seemed lost, He would restore the kingdom of David. The most famous of these promises was made during an earlier crisis in the Davidic kingdom.

At the time when Syria and Israel were threatening the kingdom of Judah and the Davidic kingdom seemed in peril, God told the king of Judah, King Ahaz, to entrust the throne to God's care so that Judah's enemies would be defeated and the kingship would not perish. To prove His faithfulness, God told Ahaz to ask for a sign [Greek, semeion] as "deep as the nether world, or high as the sky." When Ahaz, feigning piety, refused, God responded through Isaiah:

"...Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men,

that you will try the patience of my God as well? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."[\[190\]](#)

Later, Isaiah expands on the prophecy of Immanuel. After the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were degraded, "...the people who walk in darkness will see a great light..." (Isaiah 9:1 [2], Matthew 4:16). There will be abundant gladness and great rejoicing in their hearts (Isaiah 9:2 [3]). Why are they rejoicing?

"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this" (Isaiah 9:5-6 [6-7]).[\[191\]](#)

The birth of the Messiah ushers in this era of joy and the unending Davidic Monarchy, for the child will be called "mighty God" (Hebrew, el gibbor).

Prophecies always contain some sort of sign-function so that the people will know when the prophecies have been fulfilled. What is the sign that triggers the Kingdom's restoration with the true Davidic king? In Isaiah 7:14, it is a Virgin who will conceive and bear a son. Once the chosen people witness the Virgin giving birth, they know that God is restoring the kingdom.

Isaiah 1:11 also speaks to the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. In this passage a glorious tree was cut down, leaving only a stump. Yet even when the tree of Jesse (the line of David) appears to be cut off and destroyed, God restores hope:

"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1).

Once the shoot has sprouted, God then restores the kingdom and gathers the people who had been scattered to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 11:10-13).

Some early Christian writers believed this prophecy contained a sign that preceded the Messiah's arrival, much like Isaiah 7:14. They believed the shoot, which appears first, is the Virgin Mary, and the blossom of the shoot represents Christ.[\[192\]](#)

Micah echoes Isaiah's prophetic signal of the Kingdom's restoration. Micah writes:

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel; His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. Therefore He will give them up, until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child, Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel. And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the Lord. In the majesty

of the name of the Lord, his God; And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth." [\[193\]](#)

Like Isaiah 11:1, Micah also focuses on the coming of the Messiah, who, like David, will shepherd God's people. Micah 5:1-3 [2-4] echoes Isaiah 7:14, for the sign of God's deliverance is that a promised woman (the Virgin) will give birth, "...when she who is to give birth has borne." [\[194\]](#)

Taking up the same prophetic thread, Jeremiah also prophesied the Kingdom's restoration as well as the ingathering in of all the lost tribes of Israel:

"At that time,' says the LORD, 'I will be the God of all the families [tribes] of Israel, and they shall be my people'" (Jeremiah 31:1).

God will gather those who have been lost. Joy and celebration will replace the mourning and weeping that occurred when the Assyrians carried off the Israelites into captivity.

"Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, And I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth, Among them the blind and the lame, The woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together...Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, And declare in the coastlands afar off,' And say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him And keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock...'Thus says the Lord, 'A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more.' Thus says the Lord, 'Restrain your voice from weeping And your eyes from tears; For your work will be rewarded,' declares the Lord, 'And they will return from the land of the enemy'" (Jeremiah 31:8, 10, 15-16).

God punished Israel for its sins by allowing it to be taken into exile. Rachel symbolically weeps for her lost and deported children, but one day the weeping will end, for God will restore Israel and the people will return. But when will all this happen? What sign will there be to herald the Kingdom's restoration? Jeremiah answered this question rather cryptically:

"How long will you go here and there, O faithless daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth — A woman will encompass a man" (Jeremiah 31:22).

The sign that triggers the chain of events for the restoration is this: God is going to create "a new thing in the earth." What is this "new thing"? "A woman will encompass a man." [\[195\]](#) *Then God will change (verse 23), refresh and bless Judah's lot (verses 24-28). Children will no longer be punished for their parents' sins (verses 29-30) and a New Covenant will be established between Israel and Judah. This covenant will not be written on tablets of stone, but written in their hearts (verses 31-34).*

The sign is admittedly cryptic. But when viewed within the context of the string of other signs of the restoration, it becomes clear. The new thing is the Virgin Birth. The Aquila

version of the Greek Old Testament shines light on this by translating Jeremiah 31:22 as: "The Lord created a new thing in a woman..." [\[196\]](#)

All these prophecies (Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7, 11:1, Micah 5:1-3 [2-4], and Jeremiah 31:22) present essentially the same sign that will initiate God's restoration of the lost Davidic monarchy and the kingdom of David: namely a (Virgin) mother will give birth.

At the beginning of this chapter, I conveyed a story about a fictional oak tree that would spring up in Jerusalem as a sign announcing the Messiah's birth. Imagine the excitement and joy that the arrival of the promised oak tree would have unleashed for those who were eagerly awaiting its coming. It would not be difficult to imagine that Christians everywhere would point to the oak tree as proof that Jesus is the Messiah.

The prophecies that we have examined show us that Mary is not unlike that promised oak tree in our story (Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7, 11:1, Micah 5:1-3 [2-4], and Jeremiah 31:22). Indeed, she is so much more. The Jews anxiously waited for the day when the promised woman, the Virgin, would give birth to Immanuel, the Messiah. She was the "sign" that the Messiah had come. The Woman giving birth also signaled the beginning of the restoration of David's Kingdom, the ingathering of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and our redemption. When that promised Woman did give birth, the earliest Christians were eager to share it with all. We can see this in how the New Testament applies parts of this prophetic thread to Mary.

Madonna and Child

The Gospel of Matthew is often called the Gospel of the Kingdom because, more than any other Gospel, it focuses on the Messianic Kingdom and Jesus as its King. It is no surprise, then, that Matthew, more so than the other Gospels, taps into the prophetic threads mentioned above and weaves them into the its account of Jesus' birth.

Again and again, Matthew places before the reader this theme: "[S]he who is to give birth has borne." Beginning with Matthew's genealogy in Matthew 1:1-16, the author traces Jesus' genealogy from Abraham, through David and ending with Mary.

"...Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus, who is called the Messiah."

Christian readers may glance at this passage and notice a possible reference to the Virgin Birth. Beyond a casual glance, notice how the second half of verse 16 echoes the "trigger" sign of the Kingdom that we reviewed earlier in this chapter:

"...Joseph the husband of Mary by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah." [\[197\]](#)

Also notice that even though Matthew focuses on Joseph, the center of the discussion is

still Mary and Jesus:

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His [Jesus'] mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18). [\[198\]](#)

Matthew takes care to describe the exact relationship between Jesus' mother and Joseph. Mary was betrothed and was with child before they came together. Joseph reacts by wishing to divorce Mary secretly (Matthew 1:19). An angel then appears to Joseph and explains that Mary has conceived a child by the Holy Spirit. For that reason, the Child in her womb will be named "Jesus," because He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:20-21). Matthew then applies Isaiah 7:14 to Mary:

"Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which translated means, 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:22-23).

The Virgin giving birth to Immanuel, as we have seen earlier, signals the restoration and reign of the Davidic Messiah King (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7). The unprecedented Virgin Birth of Jesus is "...a new thing in the earth – A woman will encompass a man" (Jeremiah 31:22).

Continuing in Matthew, we find the Magi learning where the Messiah was to be born through a quotation from Micah 5:1 [2].

"They said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel'" (Matthew 2:5-6).

The context of Micah 5:1-3 [2-4] concerns the ingathering of the nations and the worldwide dominion of the Messianic King. When will God bring the promised shepherd? The next two verses answer that question.

Therefore He will give them up until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel. And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the Lord, In the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth (Micah 5:3-4 [4-5]).

But Matthew did not include in his quotation the "trigger" sign that would start it all: "Therefore, He will give them up until the time [w]hen she who is in labor has borne a child" (Micah 5:3). Although Matthew's quotation omitted this phrase, he didn't omit Micah's sign. When the Magi arrived in Bethlehem, "...they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him (Matthew 2:11).

The Magi found the Madonna and Child. Micah 5 is fulfilled, not only because the Magi

found the Child in Bethlehem, but because “she who is in labor has borne.”

God’s fulfillment of Micah’s prophecy disturbed no one more than Herod. He was an Edomite with questionable legitimacy as the ruler of Israel. The arrival of the true son of David (not to mention the restoration of David’s Kingdom) directly threatened his rule. When it became clear that the Magi were not going to return from Bethlehem with the Messiah’s identity, Herod ordered the massacre of all males two years old and younger in that area (Matthew 2:16). Matthew viewed the massacre as the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy, which was quoted earlier:

"Thus says the Lord, ‘A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more’" (Jeremiah 31:15).

Rachel’s mourning for her children represented the last ounce of suffering that the exiled Israelites would experience before God restored them. What was Jeremiah’s sign of God’s restoration? Six verses later, the prophet poses the question and then answers it:

"How long will you go here and there, O faithless daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth — A woman will encompass a man" (Jeremiah 31:22).

Matthew quotes both Micah and Jeremiah within the immediate context of the Virgin Birth. By doing so, he shows that he wants his readers to understand the promised woman had finally arrived to give birth to a son, signaling the beginning of the Kingdom’s restoration with the new Messiah King.

The Virgin giving birth underscores that Christ is the promised Messiah and King. This is why Catholics are fond of icons, paintings, and statues of the Madonna and Child. Including Mary in such iconography does not detract from Jesus as Messiah King but, instead, underscores it! Catholic iconography is simply mirroring the second chapter of Matthew, which repeatedly pairs the Madonna with the Christ Child:

Matthew 2:11 “... they saw the Child with Mary His mother...”

Matthew 2:13 “... [A]n angel...appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt...”

Matthew 2:14 “So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left Egypt...”

Matthew 2:20 “... ‘Get up, take the Child and His mother and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child’s life are dead.’”

Matthew 2:21 ““So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came to the land of Israel”

Five times in ten verses, Matthew includes Jesus’ mother even though he could have

easily omitted her without changing the meaning of the passages. For example, the Magi were searching for the Child (Matthew 2:9), but Matthew said they saw the “Child and Mary his mother” (Matthew 2:11). Herod was going to kill Jesus, so an angel warned Joseph to flee to Egypt with “the Child and his mother.” If the angel had mentioned only the Child, the reader would have naturally assumed his mother would have gone as well. Instead, the angel mentions both. The same is true when the angel recalled Joseph from Egypt. Matthew wants to keep the Christ child and His mother together. Given Matthew’s use of Old Testament prophecies the answer is obvious. He wants to announce that the sign that would usher in the Kingdom’s restoration has finally taken place!

Matthew closes his second chapter with what may be a reference to Isaiah 11:1. After being warned in a dream not to go to Galilee, Joseph took Jesus and Mary to Nazareth. He did this to “fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: “He shall be called a Nazarene” (Matthew 2:23). The line as quoted appears nowhere in the Old Testament. Why did Matthew say that the Messiah would be called a “Nazarene?”

One possible answer is that the root of the word for Nazareth or Nazarene is “neser,” Nesper means “branch” or “shoot.” There are several Old Testament prophecies that speak of the Messiah as a “branch” or “shoot. One of these prophecies is Isaiah 11:1: “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, [a]nd a branch from his roots will bear fruit.” [\[199\]](#) We noted earlier that some early Christian writers suggested that this prophecy included Mary as well. Although such an interpretation is dubious, it would fit into Matthew’s recognition of the prophetic “sign” of a promised woman giving birth.

Mary as Sign in Luke

Luke’s Gospel has a different focus than Matthew’s. Luke does not focus on Christ’s Davidic kingship very much, at least not as systematically as Matthew. But he does occasionally touch on the sign that will trigger the advent of the Messiah King. For example, in Luke 1:26-27, the angel Gabriel appeared to “a virgin” named Mary and explained God’s plan to her:

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end” (Luke 1:31-33). [\[200\]](#)

In the angel’s message, several prophetic echoes are present. By connecting Jesus’ birth with the Davidic Kingship, the angel’s message to Mary fits well with the “trigger sign” passages of the restoration of the kingdom mentioned earlier, especially Isaiah 7:14.

Mary’s song of praise to God during her visit to her kinswoman Elizabeth also reflects the same themes:

"And Mary said: 'My soul exalts the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. 'For He has had regard for the humble state of His bond slave; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name...He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble... He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever.'"[\[201\]](#)

So much can be said and has already been said about this passage. In it, we can detect several points of contact emerging between Mary's words and the "trigger sign" of the Old Testament. For example, the promises of Genesis 3:15 have an affinity with Mary's declaration: "He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones, but lifted up the lowly." Christ overturns the victory that the Serpent achieved at the Fall. Indeed, God has lifted the lowly because Christ "emptied Himself" of His divine privileges, became man and died on the cross, which resulted in God greatly exalting Him.[\[202\]](#) Mary was the lowly handmaid of the Lord, yet she became the mother of the Messiah. [\[203\]](#) Christ's victory would take the rulers of this present darkness (Ephesians 6:12) and cast them down (Revelation 12:9). Mary also said "God has done great things for me" and that He has "helped His servant Israel, remembering his mercy" (Luke 1:54). Mary's conception and birth of Christ brought about the Messiah King, restoring God's mercy to Israel in the flesh (Jeremiah 31:20-25).

Let us take a minute to review the various passages that weave together the prophecy showing that God is restoring the Davidic kingdom:

Genesis 3:15 simply identifies the Messiah as the Woman's Seed. This passage also speaks of the Virgin Birth and God's promise to restore His dominion over the earth.

Isaiah 7:14 is more specific. The Woman is a virgin. The birth of her male child signals that God will deliver His people and resolve the crisis afflicting the Davidic monarchy.

Isaiah 9:6 "A child is born to us, a son is given to us." This passage describes the son as a king. Indeed, the son who is born is even called "mighty God."

Isaiah 11:1 Reveals that the Davidic tree has been cut down with no king on the throne. But a branch or a shoot will sprout from the stump and it will flower: that is, a King will appear. The shoot's appearance is the sign that the son of David has ascended to His father's throne.

Micah 5:2 [3] tells us that when "she who is about to give birth has borne" in Bethlehem one who will be a ruler and shepherd over God's people, ingathering all the lost sons of Israel.

Jeremiah 31:22 tells us that God will do something new on the earth (the Aquila translation adds "in a woman") when a woman will encompass a man. Although cryptic, we have a woman bearing a son (encompassing a man) as a sign that God will pour out

his mercy on Israel and make a new covenant after Israel experiences its last measure of sorrow (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

Mary's birth of Jesus, the Virgin's conceiving and bringing forth a son, is the trigger sign of the New Covenant, revealing that the true Davidic King has arrived, restoring the Kingdom of David that was lost. She is like the morning star that signals the arrival of the rising sun. We have seen, and will see even more clearly in the next chapter, why Catholics honor Mary as a sign proclaiming that Jesus is Messiah and Lord. Mary giving birth to Christ signals that God is fulfilling His promises. Catholics make much about Mary because to do so is to make much about Jesus. There is no competition between the two.

Yet, there is another part to the prophetic "trigger sign" of the Woman giving birth. As we have mentioned, these prophecies concern God's restoring His Davidic kingdom. This is why the child who is born is the son of David the King. The mother of the king was a very important person, who enjoyed an office in the Davidic monarchy. This "woman who is to give birth" is no ordinary woman. She is the Queen Mother, or Great Lady.

In Summary

** The Bible connects elements from Genesis 3:15 to the Davidic monarchy. The content of this prophecy ties into a string of other biblical prophecies. This prophecy, which we call the "trigger sign," is the promised Woman, a Virgin, bearing a son.*

** Responding to David's desire to build a temple for God, God promised David that his Kingdom would last forever: "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Samuel 7:13).*

** David's kingdom didn't last long. After the death of David's son, Solomon, the kingdom split into the Northern kingdom of Israel and the Southern kingdom of Judah. The Assyrians conquered the Northern kingdom, and deported most of its citizens, and the survivors intermarried and never returned as a people. The Babylonians conquered Judah and deported large numbers to Babylon. They did return, but without a Davidic King.*

** God reaffirmed in several ways His promise to David. One day He would restore the kingdom of David, gather the scattered remnants of Israel, and place a son of David on the throne forever. The "trigger sign" that God had begun to re-establish the Kingdom was that a promised woman would give birth to the promised King.*

** Through Mary, God fulfills each prophetic "trigger sign" of the Davidic kingdom (Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:2-4, Jeremiah 31:22, Isaiah 11:1).*

** Every first-century Jew must have eagerly awaited the arrival of the promised sign (the Virgin bearing the Davidic King). So, it is no surprise that when Christ's birth came, the early Christians, like Catholics today, celebrated both Mary and Jesus! Jesus did not simply appear from heaven to restore the Davidic kingdom, He was born from the Virgin*

Mary, just as God had promised.

Chapter 6 Mother of the King

Christ is King, but do we truly understand what a king is? For most people today who live in a democracy, a king is a relic of the past. He is the stuff of legends. The idea of kings and queens has become largely idealized and the few monarchs that we do know are mere figureheads with no real governing power.

Such was not the case in the ancient Middle-east. [\[204\]](#) Monarchies were common and they governed and operated within a specific and well-defined structure. When Scripture identified Jesus as the true Son of David, the Messiah King, its first-century readers knew exactly what it meant to be a Davidic king. [\[205\]](#)

For this reason, the New Testament doesn't take the time to explain, or describe, all that goes with the Davidic monarchy. It simply assumes that its original audience already was very familiar with it. For example, in Matthew, Jesus gives Simon Peter the "keys of the kingdom." Yet, Jesus doesn't explain what this meant. Matthew simply presumes the reader would already be familiar with what it represents within the Davidic monarchy (compare Matthew 16:19 and Isaiah 22:22). The same is true for being seated at the right and the left of the King (Mark 10:37,40), or what it means to be the King's friend(s) (John 15:15).

The New Testament simply presumes that its readers know this background. Our understanding of Christ as the promised Son of David, the Messiah King, depends largely on how we value and understand the roles and institutions of the Davidic monarchy. The more we understand what being a Davidic king entailed, the more we can understand Christ, Who sits on the throne of His father David forever.

Office Versus Occupants

There is a fear among some Christians today that if Jesus is said to occupy an Old Testament office, it is somehow degrading to Him because of all the wicked people who once held that office. The Davidic kingship certainly had its share of wicked occupants. David's own son, King Solomon, is among this lot. Solomon started off wise and righteous, but he eventually violated God's commands and engaged in idolatry (compare 1 Kings 11:3 and Deuteronomy 17:17). How could God associate Himself with such sinners? Why would God use something like the Davidic monarchy to be a model for Christ's kingship when so many sinful and idolatrous Kings once occupied David's throne?

To understand what God is doing, we need to make a distinction between an office and the holder of an office. It is true there were many wicked Davidic kings who abused their power. Yet, we can recognize the difference between a wicked king abusing his power and saying that the power he abused was itself wicked. Wicked kings and wicked offices are not the same. Since God blessed the Davidic monarchy, we know the office and institution was worthy to serve as a model for Christ's kingship, even though some

wicked people occupied that office (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

The same is true with the other Old Testament offices as well. Christ is not only King, but He is also our High Priest (Psalms 110:4, Hebrews 6:20, 7:3, 17, 21, 9:11). Scripture has many examples of priests who abused their office. Nevertheless, God still brought about the Old Testament priesthood, so we could better understand what Christ's priestly ministry entails. The same is true for the lesser-defined offices and occupations, such as shepherds, teachers, masters, bridegrooms, and so on. Whether there were wicked or foolish shepherds, teachers, masters, or bridegrooms doesn't matter. What matters is the office (or occupation) that Christ holds. When we make sense of these offices, we can better understand Christ.

The Old Testament Monarchy

Beginning with Adam, God has prepared His people for the coming Messiah King. As we noted earlier, God gave Adam and his wife dominion over the earth and crowned them with glory (Genesis 1:28, Psalm 8). Even God creating Adam from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7) became a metaphor for someone ascending to the office of King (1 Kings 16:2-3, 1 Samuel 2:6-8, Psalms 113:7).

We also noted how Scripture applies various images from the First Gospel (Genesis 3:15) to Kings and the exercise of their office. For example, subduing the King's enemies is like getting them to lick dust (Psalms 72:9) much like God condemned the Serpent to eat dust in Genesis 3:14. Scripture also describes kings as crushing their enemies under their feet (Numbers 25:17, Psalms 89:23 [24], 2 Samuel 22:37-43, cf. Psalms 110:1). This is much like the Promised Seed of the Woman crushing the Devil under His feet (Genesis 3:15).

Later in Genesis, Jacob prophesied that his son Judah would always have a kingship (Genesis 49:10). Balaam also foretold that, from the sons of Jacob, a ruler would arise to smite and crush the heads of his enemies (Numbers 24:17).

The Law of Moses anticipated that God's people would become a monarchy like its neighbors (Deuteronomy 17:14-15). When Israel did get its King, he was a disaster. King Saul's wickedness so displeased God that He rejected Saul as king and chose another man, David, who was after God's own heart (1 Samuel 16:1-13, 2 Samuel 5:4-5, Psalms 89:19-37, Acts 13:22). After conquering his enemies and building his palace, David wished to build God a Temple (2 Samuel 7:2). David's plan pleased God; yet God told David that his son (Solomon) would build the Temple, instead. God also promised David that his dynastic kingdom would remain forever:

"Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever" (2 Samuel 7:16).

Several times throughout Scripture, God repeats and reaffirms His promise of an everlasting kingdom (Psalms 89:4-5, 110:1-2, 132:11, Jeremiah 33:17).

However, sin quickly devastated the Davidic kingdom. David's grandson's greed caused the kingdom to split into two with the Northern Kingdom installing its own king, Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:15-17). Both kingdoms were conquered by foreign powers and sent into captivity with only the two tribes from the southern kingdom returning. It was then that the dynastic succession from David had disappeared since it looked as if no son of David would occupy the throne. Yet all was not as it seemed. God had promised that the true Son of David, the Messiah, would still come one day and rule from his father's throne forever (Isaiah 9:6-7, 11:1, Jeremiah 23:5, 30:9, Ezekiel 37:24, Micah 5:1-3 [2-3]).

All of Israel waited in anxious hope for the coming of the promised son of David to restore the kingdom. The sign of this restoration, as we have seen in the last chapter, is the promised woman giving birth to the royal son (Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:11, Micah 5:1-3 [2-3], Jeremiah 31:22, and others).

This sign, taken by itself, doesn't look very significant. What is so remarkable about a woman giving birth to a baby boy? Each of us is "born of a woman." Even more, why would a woman giving birth be a sign that God is restoring the Davidic monarchy? We find the answer in an office known as "the Great Lady" or "the Queen Mother."

The Great Lady

When we think of a kingdom, we often picture a king and a queen as its rulers. But the practice in the Davidic kingdom was different. Kings in the Old Testament practiced polygamy, so there were many queens. Although a king might have favored one wife over the others, no one wife enjoyed superior rank or authority. [\[206\]](#) The Song of Songs calls all the ladies of the King by the Hebrew equivalent for the word "queen" (that is the feminine form of "king," malkah). [\[207\]](#) None of them held a unique office over the other queens.

Yet, there was one woman in the royal court who did hold a distinctive rank, office, and dignity under the king. The title for this woman was "the Great Lady" (Hebrew, gâbiyrah). She was not the King's wife, but his mother.

Office Established

The mother of the King took office at her son's enthronement or when he was appointed to the throne. [\[208\]](#) David's son, King Solomon, set up the office shortly after he took his father's throne. When seeing his mother, Scripture says that Solomon:

"...arose to meet her, bowed before her, and sat on his throne; then he had a throne set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right" (1 Kings 2:19).

From that point on, the Queen Mother occupied a significant place in the royal court. [\[209\]](#) The Queen Mother's office was a lifelong appointment. She remained in office even if she had outlived her son. [\[210\]](#) Like the other royal officials of the court, the

Queen Mother could also be removed from her office. This happened to Maacah. She was removed "...from being queen mother, because she had made a horrid image as an Asherah" (1 Kings 15:13) during the reign of King Asa.

Guarantor of the King's Royal Legitimacy

What was the purpose of the office of Queen Mother? It wasn't just an honorific title; it also served a practical purpose. Since it is through her that the King became the lawful dynastic heir to the throne, the person of the Queen Mother became a tangible sign, a guarantee, that her son was the rightful king. For example, before David's death, two of his sons laid claim to his throne. They were Solomon, the son of David's wife Bathsheba (1 Kings 1:11, 2:13) and Adonijah, the son of David's other wife Haggith (2 Samuel 3:4, 1 Chronicles 3:2). David had sworn an oath to Bathsheba that her son, Solomon, would succeed him as King (1 Kings 1:16-30). So, the dynastic succession would lawfully run through Bathsheba to Solomon. If Bathsheba had not received this promise, the dynastic succession would then run through Haggith to Adonijah. Solomon's mother, therefore, provided Solomon with the lawful right to sit on the throne of David. That is why she could be indispensable to the king and to his reign. Indeed, their fortunes were intimately linked.

When Adonijah began to lay claim to David's throne, Bathsheba became fearful and rushed to David to reaffirm his oath. Why? Was it because she wanted what was best for her child? Of course she did, but Scripture adds another reason.

If Adonijah became King, Adonijah would have treated both Bathsheba and Solomon as criminals (1 Kings 1:21). It is obvious why Solomon's life would be in danger, but why Bathsheba's? Bathsheba, by receiving David's promise, became the tangible, living, guarantor of Solomon's right to be king. This is why Adonijah would have treated both Solomon and his mother as criminals, for it would have been too dangerous to allow Solomon and Bathsheba to be at liberty with the people. The fates of both were tied together.

Solomon's wisdom in establishing a throne for his mother in such a prominent position, at his right hand in the royal court, immediately becomes clear. She was a visible sign of the King's legitimacy as sovereign and a tangible indicator of his right to sit on the throne. This is true not only for Solomon, but for every Davidic king that followed him.

Scripture also places the Queen Mother in a prominent place when it introduces the kings of Judah in the books of Kings and Chronicles. Almost invariably Scripture will give the name of the king followed by the name of his mother.

King	The Great Lady (Mother)	Scripture
David	(New line of succession begins)	
Solomon	Bathsheba	1 Kings 1:11; 2:13
Rehoboam	Naaham	1 Kings 14:21
Abijam	Maacah	1 Kings 15:2
Asa	Grandmother Maacah	1 Kings 15:10
Jehoshapat	Azubah	1 Kings 22:42
Jehoram	(possible co-regency)	
Ahaziah	Athaliah	2 Kings 8:26
Athaliah	(Matriarch)	
Jehoash	Zibiah,	2 Kings 12:2
Amaziah	Jehoaddan	2 Kings 14:2
Uzziah (Azariah)	Jecoliah,	2 Chronicles 26:3
Joatham	Jerusa	2 Chronicles 27:1
Ahaz	(possible co-regency)	2 Kings 16:1-2
Hezekiah	Abijah	2 Chronicles 29:1
Manasseh	Hephzibah	2 Kings 21:1
Amon	Meshullemeth	2 Kings 21:19

Joshiah	Jedidah	2 Kings 22:1
Jehoahaz	Hamutal	2 Kings 23:31
Jehoiakim	Zebidah	2 Kings 23:36
Jehoichin (Jeconiah)	Nehushta	2 Kings 24:8
Zedekiah	Hamutal	2 Kings 24:18

Scripture often introduces a king by giving his name, how old he was when he became king, how long he reigned, and the name of his mother.

Common Fate

As we have seen with Adonijah and Bathsheba, the Queen Mother was the King's closest confidant and ally since both likely shared the same fate. For example, if Solomon had lost the throne to Adonijah, Bathsheba's life would also have been in danger. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the King of Judah was exiled, the Queen Mother (with his other royal officers) was exiled as well (2 Kings 24:12, Jeremiah 13:18, 22:26, 29:2). Scripture highlights how significant the Queen Mother was when it lists her name immediately after the king's, even before all the royal officers, dignitaries, and wives of the King:

"And Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it. Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he and his mother and his servants and his captains and his officials. So the king of Babylon took him captive in the eighth year of his reign... (2 Kings 24:11-12). "[\[211\]](#)"

The loss of Judah's King and Queen Mother decapitated the Kingdom. Seventy years later, when the Israelites began to return from exile, the monarchy was gone with no King and Queen Mother on the throne. The royal family tree had become a stump. Yet, God promised that even from this "stump," a successor to David's throne would come (Isaiah 11:1-2).

How could the monarchy ever be restored? There were plenty of descendants of David after the exile, but who is the mother that received the promise that her son would sit on David's throne? There weren't any until Gabriel approached Mary and said:

"... 'And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son...and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob

forever, and His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:31-33). [212]

At the beginning of the Davidic dynasty, Adonijah and Solomon were both sons of David, but Solomon became King because Bathsheba, the first Great Lady or Queen Mother, received the promise from David that her son would sit on David's throne. Mary, likewise, received God's promise, through Gabriel, that her son is given "the throne of David his father." [213]

No wonder the sign that God was restoring the Davidic Kingdom was a woman giving birth! Within the Davidic kingdom, she would be the Queen Mother who would provide the kingdom with its legitimate heir.

Queen Mother: Reflection of the King

The Queen Mother was a physical, tangible sign of the King's legitimacy. Because of this direct link, how one viewed the Queen Mother had a direct bearing on how one viewed the King. If someone disrespected the Queen Mother, he was thereby disrespecting the King. Such disrespect implied the King was not the rightful ruler. But if someone respected the Queen Mother, he thereby respected the King, showing that the king was the legitimate ruler and heir. Paying homage to the King's mother, therefore, was simply another way of paying homage to the King.

Even more, it was in the King's best interest for him to show his subjects how they should treat his mother. King Solomon did this by paying "homage" (bowing down) to his mother Bathsheba when she first entered his court. [214] Solomon even set up another throne for her at his right. This showed that she had a place of preeminence or favor before the king (compare Psalms 109:31, 110:1, 142:4, and others).

Solomon's actions are striking, but not unusual, because the office of Queen Mother was not restricted to the kingdom of Judah. It was present in other ancient monarchies as well. For example, Ugaritic kings addressed the same homage to their own Queen Mothers.

"At my mother's feet I fall. With my mother may it be well! May the gods guard you, may they keep [you] well..." [215]

Solomon's bowing down to and setting up a throne for his mother was more than simply an exaggerated expression of filial love. This was not some spontaneous and unprecedented action by Solomon. Instead, it was a significant part of how monarchies were organized and run. [216]

Therefore, honoring the Queen Mother redounds to the King's glory. It really is another way of publicly honoring the King. If someone refused to honor the king's mother, he criticized the King. He was publicly casting aspersions on the King and his right to the throne. No loyal subject would, therefore, refuse to honor the King's mother; to do so

would be to dishonor the King.

Queen Mother: Intercessor for the King's Subjects

Since the fate of the King and his mother were inextricably linked, the Queen Mother would naturally be the King's most trusted ally and advisor in the royal court. Rarely would a mother be so wicked and self-destructive as to choose to steer her child into a disaster. Such a move would not be in her self-interest, either. Because of this bond, the Queen Mother became a powerful advocate before the king for his subjects.

Those who hoped to make the king more disposed to answer favorably to their request would naturally ask the Queen Mother to present their petitions to the King (1 Kings 2:17, 2:20). Although the King was well disposed to answer his mother's request favorably, it wasn't a guarantee that he would always answer favorably. The King could refuse, as he did with Adonijah (1 Kings 2:16-23).[\[217\]](#)

Queen Mother: Minister Under the King

The Queen Mother also had a share, just as did all the officers and administrators under the King, in the King's dominion. Jeremiah 13:18-20 confirms this:

"Say to the king and the queen mother, 'Take a lowly seat, For your beautiful crown Has come down from your head.' The cities of the Negev have been locked up, And there is no one to open them; All Judah has been carried into exile, Wholly carried into exile. "Lift up your eyes and see Those coming from the north. Where is the flock that was given you, Your beautiful sheep?"

In the New Testament, the metaphor of a shepherd caring for the flock is usually reserved for those in church leadership (i.e., pastors). In the Old Testament, however, the metaphor is sometimes used to signify a sovereign's authority over his subjects (1 Kings 22:17, 2 Chronicles 18:16, Ezekiel 37:24). God's words through Jeremiah suggest that both the King and the Queen Mother had authority over the kingdom.[\[218\]](#) However, Scripture does not spell out in detail the exact nature and extent of authority the Queen Mother enjoyed. We do know that the Queen Mother, even with her lofty office, was still a subject of the King. Her ability to rule was linked to her role as intercessor to the King.

Signs of the Office: Throne and Crown

Officers of the royal court often have a sign or insignia associated with their authority. The Queen Mother had two such signs. The first is her throne at the right side of the King. This was the custom that Solomon had started:

"So Bathsheba went to King Solomon...he sat down upon his throne, and he had a throne set for the king's mother, and she sat at his right" (1 Kings 2:19).

The King and Queen Mother's thrones continued throughout the Davidic monarchy until

they were “cast down” from them with the Babylonian conquest (Jeremiah 13:18).

The second symbol of the office of Queen Mother was her crown. Jeremiah 13:18 said:

"Say to the king and the queen mother, 'Take a lowly seat, For your beautiful crown Has come down from your head.'"

The only crowned females in the Davidic monarchy were the queens and the Queen Mother. Being crowned and enthroned at the right hand of the King, the Queen Mother enjoyed a preeminence within the King's royal court.

Application to Mary

If the Queen Mother was so essential for the King, why is it that some Kings like Saul and David didn't have a Queen Mother? Indeed, someone could even argue that the bare fact that Jesus is the Messiah King does not automatically make Mary His Queen Mother. To find out more, we need to see if Jesus' Kingship differs from that of Saul and David.

Saul and David were sovereigns who began (or would have begun) new dynastic lines. That is why they had no Queen Mothers, because their mothers were not queens to their fathers. Saul's dynastic line was cut short. Because Saul had no son to take his throne, there was no "son of Saul" who became King. Therefore, there was no Queen Mother. David set up a new dynasty, which Scripture calls the "house of David." David had no Queen Mother because he did not inherit the throne; God started a new royal line with him (2 Samuel 5:1-4). However, when David's son, Solomon, became King, Solomon's mother (David's wife) became the Queen Mother.

The question for us is whether Our Lord started a new dynastic line (with no Queen Mother) or if He was a successor of David (and had a Queen Mother).

The New Testament is clear that Jesus is the Son of David (Matthew 1:1, 9:27, 20:31; Luke 20:41) fulfilling God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16. Even more, the angel told Mary that God will give her son Jesus "the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:30-33). Clearly, Jesus did not start a new dynasty. Instead, He is the Son of David, born into David's family, and a successor to David's throne. And like the other successors, Jesus also had a Queen Mother. This showed that Jesus had a legitimate succession, and so fulfilled the Old Testament promise to David. [\[219\]](#) Otherwise, a King of Judah without a Queen Mother would imply a new dynastic line, which God has made clear He did not intend to do. [\[220\]](#) That is why Mary, by God's design, is the Queen Mother.

Some of the "trigger sign" passages that we have looked at earlier also point to the promised Woman's being a Queen Mother. For example, the resolution to the Davidic dynastic crisis comes from a virgin, who is Mary (Matthew 1:21-23), who will conceive and bear a son (Isaiah 7:13-14). Also, a king will arise from David's city, Bethlehem (1 Samuel 20:6). This will come about when she who is to bring forth has brought forth a

son (compare Micah 5:2-3 [3-4] and Matthew 2:2-6). [\[221\]](#)

Just as the Queen Mother's fate was tied to her son, so it was with Mary. When Adonijah made pretensions to take David's throne, Solomon's mother feared that both she and her son would be treated as criminals (1 Kings 1:21). The same is true for Jesus and Mary. When King Herod, a man with no birthright to be the King of Judea, heard that the Messiah King had been born, he sought to eliminate the true heir to the throne, but an angel warned Joseph to take Mary and Jesus and flee to Egypt for safety. As we mentioned earlier, Matthew repeatedly, throughout this incident, turns the reader's attention to "the child and His mother" (Matthew 2:11, 13, 14, 20, 21). It is also significant that she is present at other important junctures in Jesus' life. She is involved in his first miracle in Cana (John 2:1-11). She was at Jesus' side during the Crucifixion (John 16:25), and after the Ascension Mary was with the Apostles at Pentecost (Acts 1:26).

Given this relationship between Jesus, the Davidic Messiah King, and Mary, His Queen Mother, it is inconceivable that Jesus would have failed to provide proper honor to His mother both as the Son of David and in His perfect fidelity to His Father's Law (to honor His father and mother). He undoubtedly bestowed upon His Queen Mother the two signs of her office, a crown and a throne in His royal court. If Solomon did this for Bathsheba, it makes sense that He who is greater than Solomon would have done even more.

When did Christ bestow this honor upon Mary? Queen Mothers were installed at their sons' enthronements. Although the cross could be such an enthronement, which we will discuss later, Christ's eternal enthronement took place after His ascension into heaven (Acts 2:33-34, Revelation 12:5-10). [\[222\]](#) We will see the biblical confirmation for this later.

As with the Queen Mothers in ancient times, the honor given to the Queen Mother redounds to the glory of the king, for she affirms the king's right to the throne. [\[223\]](#) No king would ever be angry with his subjects for honoring his mother since such honor simply affirms his own kingship. However, he could rightly become angry with his subjects if they ignored or disparaged the Queen Mother, since such treatment would speak unfavorably of his throne. The same is true for Mary.

When Christians honor Mary, they are simply magnifying their honor of Christ in light of what He has done for her. As the early Christian Epiphanius once wrote, "He who honors the Lord, also honors the holy <vessel>; he who dishonors the holy <vessel>, dishonors his own Master as well." [\[224\]](#) This is especially true in regards to Mary's being Christ's Queen Mother, where she becomes a tangible public recognition that Jesus is truly the Son of David, Our King and Lord. There is no competition between Mary and Jesus anymore than there is a competition between a righteous King and his Queen Mother. The King is the sovereign Lord and the Queen Mother is a servant of the King and His kingdom.

The office of Queen Mother also reveals something else about Mary: She can present petitions to the King. In other words, Mary is an intercessor just as the other Queen Mothers were in presenting the people's requests to the King for his consideration.

Objections Answered

Someone may object to Mary's having an intercessory role in heaven. Christ is God. He already knows our needs and desires (Matthew 6:32). Christ doesn't need Mary to present petitions to Him. Therefore, it is unnecessary for Mary to be a Queen Mother interceding for us.

Of course, Christ does not need anyone to intercede because He is God. He doesn't need anything! Jesus doesn't need Mary to intercede any more than He needs us to pray for one another. But Scripture shows us that God does desire and commands us to pray and intercede for one another (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, James 5:16, and others). Christians intercede in this way, not only on earth, but also in heaven (Revelation 5:8, 8:3-4). God commands us to pray, not because He needs it, but because we need prayer in our lives. Through it we become more closely conformed to the image of His Son. [\[225\]](#)

Others might object about the authority of the Queen Mother. If Mary has this office in heaven then she must have some authority. Doesn't this contradict Jesus' words that "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18)?

If Mary's authority as Queen Mother contradicts Jesus' words, then so does Matthew 19:28 where Our Lord said, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." It also would contradict Christ's words to His Apostles that they, "...may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:30) and Paul's words: "If we persevere, we shall also reign with Him..." (2 Timothy 2:12). If Mary's occupying the throne of the Queen Mother in heaven contradicts Jesus' words (that all authority is given to Him), then upon what basis can one argue that it doesn't also contradict all these other passages (i.e., Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30, 2 Timothy 2:12).

We find the solution to these seeming contradictions in the two preceding verses of Luke 22:30. "You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30). All authority in heaven and on earth is given to Christ, yet that does not mean that he did not call certain people, such as the Apostles, to speak and act with His authority (Matthew 28:18-20, John 20:20-23). Mary stood by Jesus during His trials more than even the Apostles did. She was called to be His Queen Mother and was allied with Him in enmity against the Serpent. If Christ could give the Apostles thrones and the authority to judge and reign with Him, how much more could He give these things, which the other

Queen Mothers enjoyed in their offices, to Mary, "...the Virgin Mother who brought forth the King of the whole world"?[226]

In Summary

** God's Providence guided the Jews to develop various offices and structures (e.g., the priesthood, the High Priest, the Kingship, and others) so when the Messiah arrived, the Jews could understand Christ and His mission.*

** Offices and officeholders are two distinct things. Someone can abuse or misuse his office, but that does not change the legitimate authority of their position. So then, offices like the priesthood can still apply to Christ (e.g., Hebrews 2:17) even though wicked men, like the sons of Eli, abused their positions as priests (1 Samuel 2:12-17). The essential nature and structure of the priesthood are still applicable. The same is true for all the other offices and occupations as well.*

** The office of the Great Lady or Queen Mother continued throughout the Davidic monarchy. The Queen Mother is a visible tangible sign and office in the King's royal court that manifested the King's dynastic legitimacy. Her counsel aided in providing continuity with his predecessor's policies.*

** David's son Solomon set up the office of Queen Mother: "...the king arose to meet her, bowed before her, and sat on his throne; then he had a throne set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right. (1 Kings 2:19).*

** The honor (or dishonor) a subject gave to the Queen Mother reflected on the King.*

** The King and Queen Mother's fates were inextricably intertwined. When a King took the throne, so did his Queen Mother. If another seized a King's throne, the lives of both the fallen King and Queen Mother would be in danger (1 Kings 1:21). If the King was deported, the Queen Mother (and all the royal court) were also exiled with him (2 Kings 24:12, Jeremiah 13:18, 22:26, 29:2).*

** The "trigger sign" of the Davidic Kingdom's restoration are prophecies of the promised Queen Mother's giving birth to the Messianic King. Only Mary ultimately fulfills these passages' prophecies of the Woman (Isaiah 7:14, 11:1, Micah 5:1-3 [2-4], Jeremiah 31:22).*

** The sign of the Queen Mother's office was her crown and her throne in the royal court.*

** The Queen Mother was the King's closest confidant. She offered counsel, presented petitions to the King for his subjects, and shared, in some subordinate sense, in his reign.*

** Mary is the Queen Mother of the Messiah King, the son of David (Isaiah 7:14, 11:1, Micah 5:2-3 [3-4], Jeremiah 31:22, Matthew 1:22-23, Luke 1:32, 43). Her fate is inextricably united to Christ's being at enmity with the Serpent (Genesis 3:15). When the*

Messiah King took His seat on His throne in heaven, His mother was also enthroned in His royal court. There she fulfills her office as an sign of the King's dynastic legitimacy, intercessor, and (just as the saints were promised) she reigns with Him (Luke 22:28-30, 2 Timothy 2:12).

Chapter 7 Christ: Head and Body

God's providence has shaped sacred history in such a way that by better understanding the events of the Old Testament, the better we understand Christ and His work of redemption. The same is true for Mary. By gaining a better appreciation of Christ through these events, Mary's place in God's plan also comes to light. For example, by fully grasping the details of Adam's Fall, Christ's role as the New Adam in God's perfect plan of redemption comes into a fuller light, as well as Mary's role as the New Eve. Also, by understanding the Davidic monarchy in its fullness we have a better grasp of how Christ is truly the Son of David, the Messiah King, and the better we understand Mary's role as Queen Mother.

In this chapter, we will examine the biblical understanding of Christ's relationship to the Church and ultimately what that relationship tells us about Mary.

Personal Relationship with Christ

For most Christians their relationship with Christ is very important, yet few Christians really comprehend the true biblical depth of what that relationship is truly meant to be. If you are a Christian, how would you describe your relationship to Christ? Most would describe it as a close personal relationship. By this, they mean that they have a close one-on-one daily walk with the Lord. Christ is the most important person in our life. He is our friend, our brother, our Lord and Savior, and our strength. All of this is great. In fact, it's tragic if you don't have a personal relationship with Christ.

However good the language surrounding a "personal relationship with Christ" is, and it is very good, it still falls short of fully expressing the true unity that a Christian has with his Lord. The Bible sees our relationship as something far more intimate. For example, the conversion of Paul gives us our first glimpse at the amazing intimacy that Christians have with their Lord.

Paul, Christ, and the Church

While on his way to persecute Christians, Saul was struck down by a miraculous manifestation of Christ, in which he heard the words:

"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he [Saul] said, 'Who are you, Lord?' Then He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting'" (Acts 9:4-5). [\[227\]](#)

Jesus' phraseology is very important. Notice, He did not ask Saul, "Why are you persecuting my Church?" or "Why are you persecuting My followers?" or even, "Why are you persecuting those who have a personal relationship with Me?" Rather, He asked, "...why are you persecuting me? ... I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

The importance of Christ's words cannot be overestimated. Jesus and Christians are so

intimately united that Christ actually identifies Himself with us, so that, when Saul persecuted Christians, in some mysterious sense he persecuted Christ Himself.

Christ's words to Paul radically changed the Apostle's life. Indeed, Paul, more than any other New Testament writer, focuses on that mysterious unity that exists between Christ and His Church. Paul explores this truth using several different analogies. For example, Paul wrote of the Church being the bride of Christ:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body" (Ephesians 5:25-30). [\[228\]](#)

This mysterious unity of Christ and His Church is likened to the one-flesh unity of a husband and wife. It is also instructive to note that even though husbands and wives share a one-flesh bond, they remain separate and distinct individuals. So it is with Christ and the Church. They remain separate and distinct, and yet they are bound together, in a mysterious fashion, in a one-flesh relationship, as members of one Body. Christ loves the Church as His own Body; He nourishes and cherishes it.

As good as the description of a "personal relationship" may be, it falls short of the teachings of Christ and Paul in this regard. For example, husbands and wives also have a personal relationship with each other. Indeed, it is tragic when that relationship is strained or even temporarily broken. But they are still married because their one-flesh union continues even when their personal relationship seems to have disappeared. The same is true with Christ and Christians. Although it is very good for Christians to have a personal relationship with Christ, there is far more to our union with Him than just that. We are united to Christ in a one-flesh union, as husband and wife and as members of His Body.

Paul's teaching on the Church as Christ's Body is real. It is not a metaphor or a P.C. (pastorally correct) way of putting things. It is mystical and real. So real, in fact, that it has practical, real-life, moral implications for Christians. Paul, for example, uses it as the basis of his moral instruction of the Christians in Corinth:

"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, 'THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.' But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:15-17). [\[229\]](#)

Consorting with a prostitute has grave moral implications for the Christian, as a member

of Christ's Body. Paul rhetorically asks, "Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?" To consort with a prostitute is to become "one body with her." Paul adds, "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17). An immoral Christian does more than defile his own body, He is unfaithful to his one-flesh spiritual union with Christ.

This idea of the Church being Christ's Body is a favorite theme of Paul. He broaches the subject in a number of passages (Romans 12:3-4, 1 Corinthians 6:15-16, 12:12-13, 27; Ephesians 3:6, 4:12, 5:23, Colossians 1:24, 3:15, etc.). Unfortunately, as with the many other recurring themes in Scripture, we become so familiar with them that we skim over them in our Bible reading as if they have no special importance. It becomes biblical fly-over country, even though the very reason themes recur over and over again is precisely because they are important! Christ's intimate unity with His Body, the Church, is important, not only for Paul, but it is emphasized elsewhere in the New Testament as well.

Biblical Association

Look at how Christ associates Himself with the Church in His discourse on the Final Judgment in the Gospel according to Matthew:

"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me'" (Matthew 25:34-40, *Emphasis mine*).

Commenting on this passage, the early Christian writer, Augustine wrote:

"But He [Christ] is wont to assume the person of His members, and to ascribe to Himself what should be said of them, because the head and the body is one Christ; whence that saying in the Gospel, 'I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat.' Expounding which, He says, 'Since ye did it to one of the least of mine, ye did it to me.'" [\[230\]](#)

To feed the needy is to feed Christ. To persecute Christians is to persecute Christ. Christ ascribes the things done to the Church as being done to Him because, as Augustine said, "the head and the body is one Christ." Saul persecuted the Body of Christ; he was also the persecuted Head, Jesus, because "both the head and the body is one Christ."

Again, this is not some pie-in-the-sky, flowery, homiletic material. It describes a concrete

reality that has very important implications for our lives. Christ's intimate association with His Church also impacts the meaning of several Old Testament messianic texts. Consider its implications on Paul's interpretation of the promised Seed of Abraham.

The Seed of Abraham

In Galatians 3:16, Paul states that God promised to bless all the nations through Abraham's Seed. But who is this Seed? Is Abraham's offspring fulfilled in one individual or through all of Abraham's descendants?

Paul insists that it is fulfilled in only one individual:

"Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed [Greek, spermati, dative, singular]. He does not say, 'And to seeds [Greek, spermasin, dative, plural],' as referring to many, but rather to one [Greek, eph henos], 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ."

Paul is emphatic. The Seed (singular) refers only to one individual, Christ. [\[231\]](#) Otherwise, according to Paul, the text should have said "Seeds," plural, (Greek, spermasin), "as referring to many." The Apostle revisits the same point in verse 19:

"...until the seed [Greek, sperma, nominative, singular] should come to whom the promise had been made."

God will not bless the earth through many descendants (seeds) but through only one descendant (Seed, singular), Christ.

In Galatians 3:27-29, however, Paul uses the same point to say something very important about Christians, but it is easily missed if the reader is not paying close attention. Paul writes:

"For you are all sons [plural] of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you [plural] who were baptized into Christ [singular] have clothed yourselves [plural] with Christ [singular]. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you [plural] are all one [Greek, heis] in Christ Jesus [singular]. And if you [plural] belong to Christ [singular], then you [plural] are Abraham's offspring [singular], heirs according to promise." [\[232\]](#)

Notice how Paul moves from the plural to the singular. There is only one seed, one individual, who is Abraham's promised Seed, Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16,19). Yet, all Christians are united to Christ in such a way that we are identified with Him. Just as Augustine said "the head and the body are one Christ," Paul teaches in this passage that, prophetically, all Christians become that numerically one individual, that singular Seed of Abraham, in Christ (Greek, "heis este en christô iêsou").

God's promise in Genesis 12:7 takes on a kind of duality or a twofold aspect. Its primary, literal, historical fulfillment is Christ alone, and yet, because we are One Body in Christ, it

also applies, according to Paul, to all Christians as well.

As Augustine explains:

"But He [Christ] was made One with us, in that 'He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant;' He was made one with us, according to the seed of Abraham, 'in whom all nations shall be blessed.' Which place when the Apostle had brought forward, he said, 'He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ.' And for that we too belong to that which is Christ, by our incorporation together, and coherence to That Head, It is One Christ. And also for that he says to us too, 'Therefore are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.' For if the seed of Abraham be One, and That One Seed of Abraham can only be understood of Christ; but this seed of Abraham we also are; therefore this Whole, that is, the Head and the Body, is One Christ." [\[233\]](#)

Augustine elsewhere shows how "this Whole, that is, the Head and the Body, is One Christ" impacts the meaning of several messianic prophecies:

"...[K]nowing as we do that the head and the body—that is, Christ and His Church—are sometimes indicated to us under one person (for it is not in vain that it is said to believers, 'Ye then are Abraham's seed,' when there is but one seed of Abraham, and that is Christ), we need not be in a difficulty when a transition is made from the head to the body or from the body to the head, and yet no change made in the person spoken of. For a single person is represented as saying, 'He hath decked me as a bridegroom with ornaments, and adorned me as a bride with jewels' and yet it is, of course, a matter for interpretation which of these two refers to the head and to the body, that is, which to Christ and which to the Church." [\[234\]](#)

Scripture can speak of Christ either as the Head, or the Body (the Church), or both, without indicating a change in person because "the head and the body are one Christ." This does not mean, however, that Christ and the Church are equals. The Body is always dependent upon the Head just as the branches are entirely dependent upon the Vine (John 15:4-5), or, to use Augustine's example of Isaiah 61:10 LXX, the Bride (the Church) only exists because Christ is first the Bridegroom. If there is no Bridegroom, there is no Bride. If there is no Christ, there is no Body of Christ, the Church.

From Abraham's Seed to the Woman's Seed

The same kind of duality is at work in the First Gospel (Genesis 3:15). Jesus alone is the primary, historical, literal fulfillment of the Woman's Seed. He alone crushes the head of the Serpent and destroys the works of the Devil (Romans 5:17-21, 1 John 3:8, et al.), as Paul wrote:

"For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive...For He must reign until He has put

all His enemies under His feet (Psalm 110:1). The last enemy that will be abolished is death" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 25-26).

Christ will put all His enemies, including the Devil (Serpent), under His feet just as the Woman's Seed will crush the head of the Serpent.

Elsewhere, however, Paul seems to say something quite contradictory to this in his Letter to the Romans where he says that God will crush Satan under the feet of Christians:

For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you (Romans 16:19-20).

Which is it, Paul? Who crushes Satan under their feet, Christ or Christians? Galatians has shown us that the correct answer is both: Christ crushes the Serpent as the Head and as the Body. Christ as Head is the primary, literal, historical, fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 because He alone crushes the head of Satan through his death and resurrection. He also crushes Satan under the feet of Christ's Body, the Church. [\[235\]](#) As the Epistle to the Ephesians says:

"And He put all things in subjection under His [Christ's] feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23).

God places all things in subjection to Christ. He gave Christ "as Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body." The Church is "the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Therefore, the Serpent's head is crushed by Christ (the Head) and the Church (the Body). Christ is the primary, literal, fulfillment of the Seed in Genesis 3:15. The Church is included in that Seed because "this Whole, that is the Head and Body, are one Christ."

Luke 10:1-14

Luke 10:1-14 brings out this point very well. Christ tells His seventy disciples that they will preach and teach with His authority by saying:

"He who hears you hears me and he who rejects you rejects me" (Luke 10:16).

Christ's words reflect the Head and Body language that He uses elsewhere, as, for example, in Matthew at the Final Judgment where he says, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me." Only in this case Christ associates Himself with His disciples' preaching so that whoever hears their preaching, hears Christ, and, whoever rejects their teaching, rejects Christ. Christ's intimate association with His disciples makes their preaching effective, so effective, in fact, that when His disciples return, they say, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name" (Luke 10:17).

Christ's responds:

"I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven" (Luke 10:18-20).

Just as in Romans 16:19-20 where God extends His dominion over the earth by crushing Satan under the feet of Christians, Luke 10:16-20 gives a similar teaching. The seventy receive authority from Christ with the result that even the demons are subjected to them. Indeed, Christ says that He saw "Satan fall from heaven like lightening" as a result of their mission. By sending the disciples with His authority ("he who hears you hears me") He gave His disciples the authority to tread upon serpents and "...over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:17-20). [\[236\]](#)

Who then has authority over Satan and the power of the enemy? Christ alone does, as Head and Body, because the Father gave Christ "...as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Application to Mary

The better we understand Christ, the more we can understand Mary and her role in God's plan. In this chapter we explored Christ's intimate association with the Church as His Body and Bride. As Augustine put it, we saw how "the Whole, that is the Head and Body, is one Christ." We also observed how Christ's association with His Body affected several Old Testament prophecies. But what does this tell us about Mary, His mother?

The Virgin Birth placed Mary in a unique maternal relationship with Jesus that no other mother in history has enjoyed: She is His mother and Christ is exclusively her Son. But that is not the end of the story. Christ's special relationship with the Church (as Head and Body) also affects Mary. She is the mother of "the one Christ" who is "both the Head and the Body." Mary's motherhood, therefore, takes on a kind of duality, which we will call, for lack of a better term, Mary's dual maternity.

Just as Christ's association with His Church affects several messianic prophecies, it also affects certain prophecies concerning Mary as well. For example, the promised Seed of Genesis 3:15 is identified exclusively with His mother: He is "Her Seed." Christ is the primary, the literal, historical, fulfillment of "Her Seed," but, as we have seen earlier, since Christ is both the Head and the Body, the Church also crushes the head of the Serpent because we are members of His Body. We are "Her Seed" as well.

In the next chapter, we will see how Christ's association with the Church and Mary's dual maternity also help make sense of several messianic Daughter Zion passages as well.

In Summary

** One of the most influential revelations Christ made to Paul was the words He spoke at his conversion, “‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ He [Saul] said, ‘Who are you, sir?’ The reply came, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting’” (Acts 9:4-5). Christ did not say, “Why are you persecuting my followers” or “Why are you persecuting the Church?” By persecuting the Church, Saul was persecuting Christ, its Head.*

** Paul further develops and explains the idea of the Body of Christ using various analogies, including the use of the one-flesh union of a bridegroom with his bride (Ephesians 5:25-30).*

** Augustine observes that, “...knowing as we do that the head and the body—that is, Christ and His Church—are sometimes indicated to us under one person...we need not be in a difficulty when a transition is made from the head to the body or from the body to the head, and yet no change made in the person spoken of. For a single person is represented as saying, ‘He hath decked me as a bridegroom with ornaments, and adorned me as a bride with jewels’ and yet it is, of course, a matter for interpretation which of these two refers to the head and to the body, that is, which to Christ and which to the Church” (On Christian Doctrine, Book 3, 31, 44).*

** Paul in Galatians 3:16-19 argues that “Abraham’s seed” refers to a numerically single individual, Christ. Later in the same chapter (Galatians 3:26-29) Paul states that in virtue of our union with Christ, all of us are the numerically one single individual Seed of Abraham.*

** Christ, both as the Head and the Body, impacts other messianic passages, such as Genesis 3:15. Christ alone is the primary, historical, literal fulfillment of the “Seed” of Genesis 3:15 in that He alone definitively crushes the head of the serpent and destroys the works of the devil (Romans 5:17-21, 1 John 3:8, et al.), as Paul wrote, “...for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive...for He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.” (1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 25-26). Christ also crushes Satan’s head through his Body, the Church (Romans 16:20). Therefore, Christ (the Head and the Body) is the “Woman’s Seed.”*

** Christ’s radical identification with the Church, being, as Augustine said, “One, both Head and Body,” gives Mary’s unique maternity of Christ a dual aspect. This “dual maternity” of Mary can be seen in other messianic prophecies as well.*

Chapter 8 Mary and Daughter Zion

So far, we have explored several prophetic messianic streams, the First Gospel, the “trigger sign” of the restoration, and so on. In this chapter, we will explore another prophetic messianic layer that uses the image of Daughter Zion. Who is Daughter Zion?

Daughter Zion is a figure or a personification used in Scripture, for God’s People and/or the city of Jerusalem. Like many collective or corporate symbols in Scripture, Daughter Zion can both point to a group of people and also have a fulfillment in one specific person.

Although there are many Daughter Zion or Zion passages in the Old Testament, not all of them find their fulfillment in Christ. To help prevent reading Jesus and Mary into these texts, the selection of texts examined in this chapter will be restricted to only those passages that the New Testament references or echoes in some significant way.

Isaiah 66:7-10

Our first Daughter Zion passage is Isaiah 66:7-8. The chapter begins by repeating God’s words to David concerning David’s desire to build God a temple:

"Thus says the LORD: ‘The heavens are my throne, the earth is my footstool. What kind of house can you build for me; what is to be my resting place? My hand made all these things when all of them came to be,’ says the LORD. This is the one whom I approve: the lowly and afflicted man who trembles at my word" (Isaiah 66:1-2).

The verses that follow speak of sacrificial abuses and God’s unanswered call. A transition occurs in verse 5 where God addresses those who fear Him and are being taunted by the wicked, saying, "...‘Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy’" (Isaiah 66:5). A sign will be given that will manifest God’s glory, the lowly will be lifted up, and the wicked repaid:

"A voice of uproar from the city, a voice from the temple, The voice of the Lord who is rendering recompense to His enemies" (Isaiah 66:6).

What is the sign of God visiting His People? Interestingly, it is the “trigger sign” of a woman giving birth to a male child. However, the woman giving birth in Isaiah is Daughter Zion, Jerusalem:

"Before she comes to labor, she gives birth; Before the pains come upon her, she safely delivers a male child. Who ever heard of such a thing, or saw the like? Can a country be brought forth in one day, or a nation be born in a single moment? Yet Zion is scarcely in labor when she gives birth to her children. ‘Shall I bring a mother to the point of birth, and yet not let her child be born?’ says the LORD; ‘Or shall I who allow her to conceive, yet close her womb?’ says your God. Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her,

all you who love her; Exult, exult [Greek, charēte chara] with her, all you who were mourning over her!"[\[237\]](#)

Christian revelation identifies the “male child” as Christ (compare Revelation 12:5 and Psalms 2:7-11). Something curious occurs in verses 7 and 8. Zion gives birth to one child, a single individual, the male child (Isaiah 66:7), which is Christ, and yet in the very next verse we find that Zion has in fact given birth to many children, a nation! Which is it? Does Zion give birth to the Messiah, a single male child or does she give birth to many children, a nation?

In the previous chapter, we saw how prophecy sometimes speaks of Christ either as Head, Body, or both. Isaiah 66:7-10 seems to have the Whole Christ in mind. She gives birth to Christ (the Head) thereby giving birth at the same time to a multitude, a nation, Christ’s Body (the Church). This further confirms that the male child is Christ since no other person in history can be both Head and Body, a single individual and a multitude.

The uniqueness of Christ as Head and Body also makes Mary unique as well, since no other woman in history could give birth to the Messiah, who is both the Head and the Body. Mary’s dual maternity has a practical application for understanding prophetic passages. It is so uniquely Marian that, as we will see in the next chapter, it cannot be assigned to any other person or personification even on a symbolic level.

There are other points of contact with Mary as well. God’s command for Daughter Zion to “rejoice” (Isaiah 66:10) corresponds to the angel Gabriel’s first words to Mary: “Rejoice, you who enjoy God’s favor! The Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28).[\[238\]](#)*The same Greek word translated “rejoice” is used in both passages. What makes this connection more certain is that Gabriel did not use a typical Hebraic greeting. The more common Hebraic greeting is “Peace to you” (Hebrew, “salom lak”) (Matthew 10:12, Luke 24:36, John 20:19, 26, Romans 1:7, et al.). Instead, Gabriel greets Mary with “Rejoice.” This greeting was so odd that Mary “...was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was” (Luke 1:29).*[\[239\]](#)*Gabriel’s use of “Rejoice” seems deliberate, if not a direct reference to Isaiah 66:10 it was at least its echo.*

The next point of contact concerns the absence of the pain of childbirth. In Genesis 3:16 God said to Eve that He would multiply the pains of childbirth. This magnification was twofold: the increase of physical pain in labor, and the accompanying sorrow of bringing a fallen child into the world.[\[240\]](#)*All childbirth after the Fall of Adam included this pain and sorrow, but not for Daughter Zion. She rejoices and gives birth before travailing in labor! In other words, Isaiah depicts Daughter Zion’s birth of the male child as if it occurred before the Fall, not afterwards, making Daughter Zion seem like a New Eve, as she would have been before the Fall.*[\[241\]](#)

Mary “rejoices” as well, and several early Christian writers taught that Christ’s birth was also painless and joyful. For example, Gregory of Nyssa wrote:

"As the Virgin herself did not know how the body that received divinity was formed in her own body, no neither did she notice the birth. Even the prophet Isaiah affirms that her giving birth was without pain, when he says: [quotes Isaiah 66:7]...For since she [Eve] who introduced death into nature through sin, was condemned to bring forth in pain and labor, it was by all means becoming that the Mother of life should begin conception in joy as well as complete the birth in joy. For the Archangel said to her: 'Rejoice, Full-of-grace.' By that greeting he took away the sorrow that was in the beginning called down upon childbearing because of the sin."[\[242\]](#)

Daughter Zion's painless and joy-filled birth of a male child, therefore, finds its completion in Mary's painless and joy-filled birth of the Christ, who is both Head and Body.[\[243\]](#)

Zephaniah 3:14-18

Our next text comes from the prophet Zephaniah who wrote of Daughter Zion (Jerusalem):

"Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has removed the judgment against you, he has turned away your enemies; The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst, you have no further misfortune to fear. On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem: Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged! The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior; He will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, He will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals" (Zephaniah 3:14-18).[\[244\]](#)

There are several important points of contact between Zephaniah 3:14-18 and Gabriel's words to Mary (Luke 1:28-32). Beginning in Zephaniah 3:14, God commands, like Isaiah 66:10, Daughter Zion to rejoice.

Zephaniah 3:14

Shout for joy [*chaire sphodra*] O daughter Zion! sing joyfully, O Israel!

Luke 1:28

And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one [*Chaire, kecharitomene*]! The Lord is with you.'

*Both passages use the same Greek word translated "rejoice" (*chaire*). Indeed, Zephaniah literally says, "Exceedingly rejoice."*

The next verse, Zephaniah 3:15, contains two additional points of contact with Gabriel's greeting.

Zephaniah 3:15

Luke 1:28, 32-33

‘...the Lord is with you!’

The King of Israel, the
LORD, is in your midst...

‘...and the Lord God will give
him [your child] the throne of
David his father, and he will
rule over the house of Jacob
forever, and of his kingdom
there will be no end.’

In both passages, the Lord is “in the midst” or “with” Daughter Zion and Mary, respectively. Both passages also speak of the King of Israel. Zephaniah says that “the King of Israel” is in Daughter Zion’s midst and Gabriel tells Mary that her child is also the King of Israel, in that God has given Him “the throne of David” and He will “rule over the house of Jacob.”

Zephaniah 3:16-17 has two more points of contact with Gabriel’s greeting.

Zephaniah 3:16,17

Luke 1:30

On that day, it shall be
said to Jerusalem: Fear
not, O Zion, be not
discouraged!

And the angel said to her, ‘Do
not be afraid, Mary, for you
have found favor with God.’

He will rejoice over you
with gladness, and renew
you in his love, He will
sing joyfully because of
you.

It is prophesied that “On that day,” when the King of Israel comes into Zion’s midst, “it shall be said to Jerusalem: Fear not, O Zion...” Gabriel, on the day he announced to Mary that her child would sit on the throne of his father David, said to Mary, “Do not be afraid...for you have found favor with God.”

The reason why Daughter Zion and Mary should not fear is also the same. God is pleased with both. God “will rejoice over” Daughter Zion and Mary has “found favor with God.”

The Hebrew text of Zephaniah 3:17 and Gabriel’s words in Luke 1:31 also has a number of contacts:

Zephaniah 3:17

Luke 1:31

The LORD, your God,
[Hebrew, YHWH-Elohim] is
in your midst [Hebrew:

‘And behold, you will
conceive in your womb and
bear a son, and you shall

in your midst [Hebrew: call his name Jesus
beqirbek], a mighty savior. [Yahweh-Savior].’

The first point of contact concerns God being in Daughter Zion’s midst and Mary conceiving Jesus in her womb. The same Hebrew word (beqirbek) could be used for both passages, as George Montague explains:

"The Hebrew word beqirbek can mean ‘in your midst’ when it is used of a city (as in Zephaniah’s text), but the same word when used of a woman can mean ‘in your womb’ (Gen. 25:22). Luke would then understand the Zephaniah prophecy about the Lord coming into the midst of his people as fulfilled by the Lord-Savior coming into the womb of Mary."[\[245\]](#)

In both texts, Daughter Zion and Mary have the Lord God beqirbek, that is “within them.”

The second contact concerns the different descriptions of the Lord. The best way to show this second contact is to give a somewhat literalistic translation of Zephaniah 3:17, translating the Hebrew word beqirbek as it would be proper for a woman: “YHWH-Elohim is in your womb, a mighty savior.”

Gabriel tells Mary that she will “conceive in your womb” (beqirbek) and bear a son that she will name Him Jesus, which in Hebrew is Yeshua. Yeshua is a combination of two Hebrew words: God’s name, Yahweh (YHWH) and the word “shua” which means “to save” or “savior.” When the two verses are lined up, they say:

Zephaniah 3:17

*“YHWH-Elohim is **in your midst** (beqirbek), a mighty **savior**.”*

Luke 1:31

*“...conceive **in your womb** (beqirbek)... his name **YHWH-Savior**.”*

Zephaniah describes YHWH-Elohim as “a mighty savior” and Jesus’ name, Yeshua, means “YHWH-Savior.” In both passages, Yahweh-Savior is “in the midst” (beqirbek) of both Daughter Zion and Mary.

Like Isaiah 66:7-10 above, Zephaniah’s prophecy concerns something that took place long ago, that is when God came to the city of Jerusalem, but it finds its ultimate fulfillment in Mary’s becoming Christ’s mother.

Zechariah 2:14-15

The third and final Daughter Zion passage under consideration comes from Zechariah 2:10-11 [14-15], which reads:

and I will dwell (Greek, kataskenoso) in your midst," declares the LORD. Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you."

Like Daughter Zion in Isaiah and Zephaniah, God commands Daughter Zion to "rejoice," although it uses a different Greek word than that used by Gabriel, Isaiah, and Zephaniah. [\[246\]](#)

A second point of contact with Mary concerns how God comes to Daughter Zion. God says, "I am coming to dwell among you" (Zechariah 2:10 [14]). The word translated "dwell" in Greek is kataskenoso, which has for its root the word for "tent" or "tabernacle" (skene), namely, the portable tent or tabernacle that housed the Ark of the Covenant which God's glory overshadowed (Exodus 40:35; 1 Kings 8:10; Haggai 2:6-9). Although David had resolved to replace the portable tent or tabernacle with a permanent Temple (2 Samuel 7:2), he never did so. It was the son of David, King Solomon, who completed the Temple, which was still occasionally called the tent or tabernacle (Jeremiah 10:20, Lamentations 2:6).

When Zechariah says that God "dwelt" among the Israelites, he is literally saying (in the Greek), "I will tabernacle among you." This rather odd choice of words is also used in John 1:14 to describe the Incarnation:

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt [eskenosen] among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

John literally says, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." The same word used in Zechariah. [\[247\]](#) When did the Word "tabernacle" Himself among us? It happened after the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and she conceived Christ:

"The angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God'" (Luke 1:35).

The word translated "overshadow" (Greek, episkiazo) is used elsewhere in the Old Testament for God's presence overshadowing various things, including the Tabernacle or Temple. For example, God's presence filled Moses' Tabernacle in the desert (Exodus 40:35), the Jerusalem Tabernacle (1 Kings 8:10) and God's future Tabernacle (Haggai 2:6-9, Hebrews 12:26-29).

According to Gabriel, Mary is "overshadowed" by the power of the Most High like the Old Testament Tent or Tabernacle. It is then, at the Incarnation, that "the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us."

Both Daughter Zion and Mary are to rejoice because God is going to "tabernacle" in their midst.

The final point of contact between Daughter Zion and Mary concerns the next line of Zechariah's prophecy.

"On that day," when God "tabernacles" himself in Zion - "...[m]any nations shall join themselves to the LORD." The statement that many nations shall join themselves to the Lord "on that day" sounds suspiciously like Zion's dual maternity in Isaiah 66:7-8, where Daughter Zion gives birth to a male child and a nation. Only in Zechariah, "on that day" when God tabernacles in Zion "...[m]any nations shall join themselves to the LORD."

All three of these texts find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ and Mary. Mary fulfills in her person what is said of Jerusalem (Daughter Zion). What do Mary and Jerusalem have in common? Scripture gives several points to consider, each point shedding light on Christ, the Incarnation, and Mary. Like Jerusalem, God commands Mary to "rejoice" and "not be afraid" because she has found favor with God. Like the Jerusalem Temple, the power of God overshadows Mary when he comes in her midst (i.e., into her womb) and "tabernacles" Himself and dwells with her. In addition to these points of contact, these three Daughter Zion texts also bring together several themes that have been discussed in this book. For example, Daughter Zion is a New Eve. She gives birth to the Messiah King. Daughter Zion also, in two of the texts, has what appears to be a "dual maternity." All of these themes find their fulfillment in the Virgin Mary.

Praising Daughter Zion

At the beginning of this book, we explored how all creatures can receive a relative honor or glory without detracting from the infinite glory of God. Of all the created things in the Old Testament, Scripture gives the highest praises to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is called the city of God (Psalms 46:4 [5]; 48:1 [2]), the city of the Lord (Isaiah 60:14). It is called the city of the great king (Psalm 48:1 [2], Matthew 5:35), the city of righteousness (Isaiah 1:26), the city of truth (Zechariah 8:3), the holy city (Nehemiah 11:1, Isaiah 48:2, Matthew 4:5), the throne of the Lord (Jeremiah 3:17), Zion of the holy one of Israel (Isaiah 60:14), the all-beautiful city, and the joy of the whole earth (Psalm 48:1-3, Lamentations 2:15).

What made Jerusalem worthy of such praise was that God chose her as His dwelling place. That reason alone, that the Almighty, the Incomprehensible Creator of all, dwelt in Jerusalem made it an object of the highest praise. Psalms 137:6 even goes as far as to say, "May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth. If I do not remember you, if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy." [\[248\]](#)

If such praise is given to a city simply because God chose it to be His dwelling place and an object of His delight, how much more the Virgin Mary. To become flesh, God chose Mary to be His mother. She is the mother of the Great King because she gave birth to the Messiah. She is the seat of Wisdom, as well as of Truth and Righteousness, because the Child that once sat on her lap is the Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24), and the Truth

(John 14:6), and our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). Scripture calls Jerusalem the “holy city” because God once dwelt in it (Nehemiah 1:11, Isaiah 64:9-10 [10-11]). Mary is called holy as well. She is “beautiful and the joy of the whole earth” because God made her the chosen vessel to bear His Son and to be the New Eve. Mary is the hoped-for sign of the restoration of the Kingdom and, like Daughter Zion, who rejoices along with all who are with her, she gave birth to the male child and to a nation.

Within Roman Catholicism, there are various devotions that praise Mary. Some of these practices seem odd and out-of-place for many non-Catholic Christians. However, if Scripture itself advocates praising and giving honorific titles to Jerusalem because God dwelled in the Holy City and has done great things for her, why wouldn’t Christians do the same for Mary, in whom these Daughter Zion texts find their ultimate fulfillment? Think about it. David said, “May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy” (Psalms 137:6). He said this because God has done great things for Jerusalem. When Catholics make such a fuss about Mary, they are essentially doing what David did. They are rejoicing in Mary because “the Almighty has done great things” for her and they exalt Mary beyond all their delights.

In Summary

** The figure of Daughter Zion is a personification of God’s People and/or the city of Jerusalem. As a prophetic symbol, Daughter Zion can find its fulfillment in a number of different ways, including its application to an individual.*

** The “Daughter of Zion” prophecies addressed in this chapter are limited to those that are messianic and have some contact with the New Testament. This is done to avoid mistaking typology for prophecy.*

** Isaiah 66:7-10 presents Daughter Zion giving birth to a single individual (a male child) and a many children, a nation. The male child is Jesus (Revelation 12:5) and there are a number of points of contact with the New Testament.*

** Zephaniah 3:14-18 offers several points of contact between Daughter Zion and the angel’s words to Mary in Luke 1:28-32. Both Daughter Zion and Mary are told not to fear. Both Zephaniah and Gabriel announce that God-Savior (Yeshua) will dwell within her. Daughter Zion has “YHWH-Lord, a mighty savior” who will dwell “in her midst” and Mary will have Jesus (Yeshua = YHWH-Savior) dwelling within her womb.*

** Daughter Zion in Zechariah 2:14-15 also has contact with Mary. Both Daughter Zion and Mary are to “rejoice.” God said to Daughter Zion, “I am coming to dwell (tabernacle) among you.” John 1:14 reads, “And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling [tabernacle] among us...” Zechariah prophesied that “on that day” (when God tabernacles) many peoples and nations will join themselves to the Lord. Because Christ is Head and Body, one could say that “many peoples and nations” joined themselves to*

Head and Body, one could say that “many peoples and nations” joined themselves to Christ, when He became flesh in Mary’s womb.

In these passages, Jerusalem (Daughter Zion) finds its ultimate fulfillment in the Virgin Mary. In the Old Testament, Scripture promotes and exalts Jerusalem to a great degree because God has done great things for the Holy City. Mary, fulfilling these Daughter Zion texts, is greater than Jerusalem. When Catholics praise and exalt Mary, they do nothing more than imitate the Old Testament’s praise and exaltation of Jerusalem. If Scripture can praise and exalt a city because God dwelt in it and has done great things for it, how much more should Christians praise and exalt Mary because God became flesh in her womb and has also done great things for her.

Chapter 9 Mary's Dual Maternity

In chapter 7, we examined Christ's relationship to the Church, as the Head to the Body. Because His relationship to the Church is so intimate and unique, it affects one's interpretation of several messianic prophecies, including a few prophecies regarding Daughter Zion.

We must remember that God's relationship to His Church is not a fiction or an interpretative gimmick to "re-imagine" new meaning in old prophetic texts. It expresses a truth. Moreover, its application to prophetic texts expresses truth as well. Jesus really is the Seed who crushes the Serpent's head (Genesis 3:15) through His passion, death, and resurrection, He truly destroys the works and power of the Devil. The same is true with His Body, the Church. God really does crush Satan under the Church's feet as well (Romans 16:20). This is not an interpretive gimmick: it is a description of reality.

Christ's relationship to the Church also expresses something true about Mary. Christ is truly "Her Seed" since He is exclusively related to Mary through the Virgin Birth (Genesis 3:15). The Church is also truly "Her Seed" because it is one Body in Christ. The Woman of Genesis 3:15 has a dual maternity because Mary has a dual maternity being the mother of the one Christ, Head and Body.

Christ's Virgin Birth and His one-flesh relationship with the Church as His Body is unique. Because He had no earthly father, Christ is related exclusively to Mary (according to the flesh). Likewise, the Church is exclusively related to Christ because it is one Body in Him. This makes Mary's dual maternity totally unique. No other individual, group of individuals, or people (even on a symbolic level) has "given birth" to a single child (the Head) and a multitude (the Body). Consider the following possibilities.

The New Testament Church cannot be, even on a symbolic level, the "mother" of Christ, both the Head and the Body, because the Church is Christ's Body. How can the Church be the "mother" of itself? The Old Testament Church is even more problematic. It "gave birth" to Christ and to all other Jews as well. Many of these Jews later became Christian (i.e., members of Christ's body). This would make the Old Testament Church "the mother" of Christ (both Head and Body), all other Jews, and the mother twice over of those Jews who became Christians. This is not a dual maternity: It is confusion and nonsense.

The Virgin Mary does not suffer from these anachronisms and distortions. Jesus being "conceived by the Holy Spirit" is exclusively Mary's Child, Christ's only earthly parent. The Church is exclusively Christ's Body (Ephesians 5:32). Therefore, the Virgin Birth and Christ's association with the Church make Mary the mother of Christ (the Head) and the mother of all Christians (the Body).

Since no other individual, group of individuals, or people can have (even symbolically) this

relationship, the presence of a dual maternity becomes a good identifier of Marian texts in Scripture. Whenever Scripture presents a female who alone gives birth at once to the Messiah and a multitude, that female must be, in some sense, the Virgin Mary.

Apart from these Old Testament prophecies, does the New Testament speak directly to Mary's dual maternity? Yes, it does. To find these passages we must look at the texts where Christ and the Church are united.

Becoming the Body of Christ

Two events forge the bond of unity between Christ and His Church: the Incarnation and the Cross. Both of these events are inextricably tied together. If the Word did not become flesh at the Incarnation, there would be no flesh and blood to offer on the Cross. Likewise, if the Word became flesh, but He did not offer His flesh and blood on the Cross, there would be no Church. Each event, in its own way, unites Christ to us and us to Christ.

At the Incarnation, God unites Himself to us: That is to say, God sent forth His Son, the Word, to receive our human nature. At the Cross, Christ unites us to Himself through His blood (Ephesians 2:13-16, Colossians 1:21-24, Hebrews 10:19-22). At both of these events, Mary has a special maternal role.

God Unites Himself to Us

Mary's maternal role at the Incarnation is obvious. The Word became flesh in Mary's womb, making Christ our brother:

"Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same...Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:14,17).

Because of the Virgin Birth, Christ received His flesh exclusively from Mary. There is a sense in which Mary is a kind of representative for all of mankind because the flesh Christ receives is the human nature common to us all. "He had to be made like His brethren in all things," only without sin (Hebrews 2:17, 4:15).

In a similar way, Eve was a representative for her future children in that, when she consented to the Serpent's lie, what followed (Adam's sin) affected all her children. Mary is our representative as well because, when she consented to Gabriel's Good News, what followed (the Incarnation, Christ's passion, crucifixion, and resurrection) gave life to all who are united to her Child. This paradigm is the basis for the common early Christian motif of "death through Eve, life through Mary."

God Unites Us to Himself

The second event in which Christ unites us to Himself is the Cross. Through Christ's shed

blood on the Cross, those who are called by God are saved and become one Body in Christ:

"But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity" (Ephesians 2:13-16).

Christ's passion and death on the Cross makes possible the reconciliation of sinners throughout history. In John's Gospel, our Lord said:

"Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.' But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die" (John 12:31-33).

When is Christ lifted up from the earth? He is lifted up on the Cross (John 3:14, 8:28, 12:33-34). What will Christ do when He is "lifted up" on the Cross? He will "draw all men" to Himself. How does He do this? Christ's saving work on the Cross will be applied to all those whom He draws to Himself, from the "hour" of His crucifixion until the end of time.

Through the cross, He reconciles us with God "in one body" (Ephesians 2:13-16), and by being united to Christ's death, we too may share in His Resurrection (Ephesians 2:5, Romans 6:5, Philippians 3:8-11). Christians call this passing from death to life and their incorporation into Christ's Body by different names. Some call it "the New Birth," while others call it "the Second Birth" or being "born again." Whatever name it is given, it refers to our regeneration in Christ and adoption as sons.

But where is Mary's second maternity at the foot of the Cross?

Mary's Second Maternity

It is here, at the foot of the Cross during the "hour" of Christ's passion and death, that Mary becomes a mother again:

"When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household" (John 19:26-27).

Mary receives a child at Bethlehem and Mary receives a child at Golgotha.

Housekeeping Duties?

People sometimes try to side-step or dismiss the importance of Christ's words to Mary by

insisting that Jesus was merely making a last minute, rather trivial and mundane, provision for His mother's upkeep (apparently in lieu of a last will and testament). But surely, there is something far more profound at work here.

A moment's reflection will show that such a dismissal is nonsense. Jesus knew "the hour" of His death long before the crucifixion. If this was an insignificant mundane task, why would Jesus have waited until the last minute to take care of it, especially when that "last minute" would be at the very crescendo of human history?

The surrounding context of John 19 doesn't support this view either. Beginning with verse 23 and continuing to verse 37, John meticulously identifies how each action that took place during the crucifixion, including some seemingly small and incidental details, fulfill Old Testament prophecy. For example:

John 19:23-24 Fulfills Psalms 22:18

John 19:28 Fulfills Psalm 22:15 [16]

John 19:36 Fulfills Exodus 12:46, Psalms 34:20 [21]

John 19:37 Fulfills Zechariah 12:10

John even records Old Testament echoes that took place during the crucifixion, such as the use of hyssop to offer Jesus wine. The Jews used hyssop to smear the lamb's blood on their doorpost at the first Passover (John 19:29, Exodus 12:22). He also recorded that the crucifixion takes place on the day and hour of the preparation of Passover (John 19:14), that is, when Jewish priests began to slaughter lambs for Passover. Both these details, even though they did not fulfill a prophecy, nevertheless, indicate something very important. Jesus is the true Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Given the density of prophetic fulfillments, it seems incredibly unlikely that John would have taken the time and space to record, in some detail, a trivial family matter that has no real value for his Christian readers. This fact is made even more certain when one considers that there were many other signs and deeds of Jesus that John did not record in his Gospel (John 20:30-31, 21:25).

Jesus' words to Mary and the beloved disciple must have some significance. But what could that significance be? To answer this question, we will look at another instance in which Christ calls His mother "Woman": the wedding at Cana.

The Mother of the Bridegroom

It is unprecedented in ancient literature for a son to call his mother "woman." Yet, Christ calls Mary "Woman," not once, but twice! Jesus calls Mary "Woman" here on the Cross and also earlier in John's Gospel at the wedding feast in Cana.

Mary told Jesus, "They have no wine" and Jesus replied:

"Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4).

Not only does the unprecedented use of "Woman" link the wedding of Cana with the Cross, but also Christ's reference to His hour: "My hour has not yet come." Christ's "hour" refers primarily to His passion and crucifixion.

But what does a wedding feast have to do with the Cross and Mary's becoming a mother again? To better understand how all these elements fit together, it is first necessary to grasp the significance of Mary's words to Jesus.

"When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine'" (John 2:3).

The bridegroom is responsible for providing the wine for the wedding. When Mary tells Jesus they have no wine, she is relating to Him something that concerns the duties of the bridegroom, perhaps even suggesting to Him that He may wish to step in and provide what the bridegroom could not.

Jesus responds, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not come." What is My hour? It is the passion and crucifixion, and yet, Christ is replying to Mary's request to concern himself with the duties of the bridegroom.

What Christ is essentially saying is that when His hour comes (at the Cross), He will exercise the Bridegroom's duties and concern Himself with His wedding feast. Christ is the Bridegroom and the Cross is where Christ takes His Bride, the Church, for Himself and the two become one-flesh.

What is implied at the wedding in Cana is made more explicit elsewhere in Scripture. For example, when asked why His disciples do not fast, Jesus answered:

"...The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast" (Matthew 9:15).

Jesus is the Bridegroom and His disciples are His attendants. His disciples will mourn when the Bridegroom (Christ) is taken away. When is Christ taken away? He is taken away when He dies on the Cross. It is then that His disciples will mourn (Mark 16:10, Luke 23:27, John 16:20).

Paul likewise identifies Christ's passion and crucifixion as the beginning of the one-flesh union of a husband with His bride:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her...So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies...just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE

JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:23, 28-32).

Christ's love for the Church is the love of a husband for His Bride. He "gave Himself up for her" at the Cross and He loves her as His own Body, just as in marriage "the two shall become one flesh." Christ performs His duties as the Bridegroom on the Cross where He takes to Himself His Bride, the Church.

One question still remains: What does this have to do with Mary's becoming a mother again?

When a bride and groom marry, their parents receive another child into their family. They become "mom" and "dad" to the newlyweds. This is not just a cultural formality; it is a public recognition of the one-flesh relationship of the bride and groom in marriage.

Mary is the mother of the Bridegroom. When He takes to Himself the Church at the Cross, Mary becomes a mother again. She becomes "mom" to the Bride. Mary's second maternity is not a formality. It is as real as Christ's one-flesh union with the Church is real. There is another way Mary becomes a mother again.

"Woman, Behold your son"

If Jesus was only the Head of the Church, His words to Mary, "Woman, behold your son" (John 19:26), would be nothing more than making provisions for His mother. But Christ is more than that. The one Christ is the Head and the Body. Therefore, when Christ the Bridegroom takes the Bride to Himself on the Cross, Mary, His mother, becomes a mother again.

She didn't become a mother to a different child, but to the same Child in a different way, because the one Christ is the Head and the Body. As the early Christian writer, Origen, beautifully explains:

Jesus says to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son,' (John 19:26) and not 'Behold you have this son also,' then He virtually said to her, 'Lo, this is Jesus, whom you bore.' Is it not the case that everyone who is perfect lives himself no longer, but Christ lives in him (Galatians 2:20); and if Christ lives in him, then it is said of him to Mary, 'Behold your son Christ.'

Origen is saying that at the "hour" of Christ's crucifixion, Paul, the beloved disciple, and all Christians, "have been crucified with Christ" so that "it is no longer "I" who live (whether it be Paul, the beloved disciple, or us), but Christ who lives" in us (Galatians 2:20). Therefore, since it is no longer "I" who live, but Christ in me, Mary beholds her Son Christ in the beloved disciple, and the beloved disciple beholds his mother, Mary. Paul's teaching in Galatians 2:20 comes to its fullest realization at the foot of the Cross in John 19:26-27. Christ truly lives in us because we see His mother as our mother and His

mother sees us as her son, Christ.

At the Incarnation, the Woman (Mary) gives birth to Her Seed (Christ). At the Cross, the Woman beholds Her Seed (the beloved disciple), who has become a member of Christ's Body through the Cross. Of course, the beloved disciple is not the only member of Christ's Body. All who are sanctified by Christ's blood through the "Second Birth" are members of His Body as well (Romans 6:3-11, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27-29, Ephesians 4:4-5, 5:25-30).

Bethlehem, Golgotha, and the "New Birth"

The early Christians saw these three events (the Incarnation, Christ's passion on the Cross, and the "second birth") as being united in a single mystery in God's plan. The disciple of the Apostle John, Ignatius of Antioch, for example, wrote:

"For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived in the womb by Mary according to a dispensation, of the seed of David but also of the Holy Ghost; and He was born and was baptized that by His passion He might cleanse water. And hidden from the prince of this world were the virginity of Mary and her childbearing and likewise also the death of the Lord -- three mysteries to be cried aloud -- which were wrought in the silence of God."

Likewise, Irenaeus, at the end of the second Christian century, wrote:

"Vain also are the Ebionites, who do not receive by faith into their soul the union of God and man, but who remain in the old leaven of [the natural] birth, and who do not choose to understand that the Holy Ghost came upon Mary, and the power of the Most High did overshadow her: wherefore also what was generated is a holy thing, and the Son of the Most High God the Father of all, who effected the incarnation of this being, and showed forth a new [kind of] generation; that as by the former generation we inherited death, so by this new generation [second birth] we might inherit life."

Christ is made flesh in the womb of Mary to show that a new kind of regeneration will take place. In the former generation, we are born children of Adam and we inherited death. In the new generation, foreshadowed in Christ's Incarnation in Mary's womb, we might inherit life.

Centuries later, Leo the Great expressed the same connection:

"For the birth of Christ is the origin of the people of Christ, and the birthday of the head is the birthday of the body. It is true that each of those who are called is allotted a particular place, and that all the sons of the Church are separated from each other by intervals of time. However, just as all the faithful together, born of the waters of baptism, are crucified with Christ in his passion, raised with him in his resurrection, and given a place with him at the Father's right hand in his ascension, so too with him they are born in this his birth."

The Virgin Birth, Christ's passion on the Cross, and our adoption in Christ are mysteriously linked together with Mary's virginal maternity.

Born of Woman... Adoption as Sons

Paul likewise connects Christ's birth, death, and our adoption as sons in Galatians 4:3-7, where he writes:

"So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God."

To bring out Paul's meaning, the structure of the passage quoted above needs to be examined. Paul is using a Hebraic structure called chiasm. Chiasm is a manner of speaking or writing that raises several points only to revisit them in reverse order.

Our Lord used chiasm when He said, "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39). The idea expressed seems to reflect back on itself.

Chiasms are best seen when they are diagrammed. For example, when Matthew 10:29 is diagrammed, its A-B-B'-A' structure can be easily seen:

(A) Whoever has found his life

(B) Will lose it

(B') and he who loses his life for my sake

(A') Will find it [life].

The first and last lines pertain to the "finding life" (A, A'). The two inner lines (B, B') concern "losing one's life." Put them together and the A, B, B', A' pattern emerges.

Understanding the chiastic structure can be a great aid for understanding the writer's train of thought, especially for longer and more complex passages, such as Galatians 4:3-7. When this passage is diagrammed its A-B-C-D-D'-C'-B'-A' structure or pattern can be easily seen:

[A] "...[W]hile we were children, [we] were held in bondage (by elemental powers).

[B] God sent forth his Son

[C] Born of a woman

[D] Born under the law

[D'] He might Redeem those under the law

[C'] [W]e might receive the adoption as sons.

[B'] God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son...

[A'] No longer a slave [to elemental powers], but a son and heir..."

To understand better the relationship between these pairs, let's examine each pair beginning with the first pair [A, A']:

[A] "...While we were children, we were held in bondage (by elemental powers)."

[A'] "No longer a slave [to elemental powers], but a son and heir..."

The first line [A] explains our previous condition. We were children in bondage or slavery by elemental powers (i.e., fallen angels or demons). In the corresponding last line [A'], Paul says that we are no longer slaves to these elementary powers, but "a son and heir" through God.

Notice how each line counter-balances the other. We were children (A) and we are sons (A'). We were slaves [A] and we are no longer slaves [A']. We were held by elemental powers [A], we are sons and heirs through God [A'].

The second pair [B, B'] reads:

[B] "God sent forth his Son"

[B'] "God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son..."

The meaning of the second pair [B, B'] is quite simple. "God sent forth his Son" at the Incarnation and "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son" when He sent forth the Holy Spirit.

Skipping the third pair [C, C'] for now, the fourth pair [D, D'] reads:

[D] "Born under the law"

[D'] "He might Redeem those under the law"

The inner most pair [D, D'] turns on being "under the law." Christ is "born under the law" that is He was born a Jew and followed Judaism's commandments and ordinances so that He might "redeem those under the law" (i.e., redeem the Jews). This is done by Christ's fulfilling all righteousness and satisfying the curse of the law by being "hung on a tree" (Galatians 3:13).

Mary in the Incarnation / Adoption

Let's now turn our attention to the third pair [C, C'] that we previously skipped. It reads:

[C] "Born of a woman"

[C'] "[W]e might receive the adoption as sons."

God sent His Son [B] to be Incarnate in the Virgin Mary [C]. The second half the pair refers to Christian adoption that "[W]e might receive the adoption as sons" [C']. Paul's thought connects the Incarnation with the "Second Birth" or spiritual regeneration, which is rooted in Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. Paul, therefore, connects both of Mary's maternal events within the chiasm of Galatians 4:3-7.

Joy and Sorrow

The Incarnation and Christ's sacrifice on the Cross are interconnected and inseparable, and yet they are also very different. The same is true of Mary's dual maternity. Her two maternal events are connected, and yet very different. Mary's first maternal event (the Incarnation) was physical. It involved the physical conception of our Lord in Mary's womb. Her second maternal event (at the foot of the Cross) was not physical. Also, Mary's conception and birth of Jesus was filled with Joy, but her reception of the beloved disciple

at the foot of the Cross was painful and filled with sorrow.

Joyful Birth

Daughter Zion in Isaiah 66:7-9, who at once gives birth to the male-child and a multitude, did so without pain:

"Before she travailed, she brought forth; Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons. 'Shall I bring to the point of birth and not give delivery?' says the LORD. 'Or shall I who give delivery shut the womb?' says your God."

Daughter Zion gives birth "before her pain came," as if she were Eve before the Fall. Some early Christian writers understood Isaiah 66:7-9 to be a prophecy about the Virgin Birth.

For example, John Damascene wrote:

"For He who was of the Father, yet without mother, was born of woman without a father's cooperation. And so far as He was born of woman, His birth was in accordance with the laws of parturition, while so far as He had no father, His birth was above the nature of generation: and in that it was at the usual time (for He was born on the completion of the ninth month when the tenth was just beginning), His birth was in accordance with the laws of parturition, while in that it was painless it was above the laws of generation. For, as pleasure did not precede it, pain did not follow it, according to the prophet who says, Before she travailed, she brought forth, and again, before her pain came she was delivered of a man-child. The Son of God incarnate, therefore, was born of her, not a divinely-inspired man but God incarnate..."

Mary gave birth to Christ without pain, just like Daughter Zion gave birth to the male-child. However, Daughter Zion also gives birth to a multitude, a nation. Is this birth was also painless and joyful?

Joyful Re-Birth

According to Jerome, the birth of the multitude (or nation) in Isaiah 66:8 is the joyful painless "re-birth" of Christians through waters of regeneration into Christ's Body, the Church:

"The Saviour Himself does not preach the kingdom of heaven until by His baptismal immersion He has cleansed the Jordan. Water is the matter of His first miracle and it is from a well that the Samaritan woman is bidden to slake her thirst. To Nicodemus He secretly says:—'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.' As His earthly course began with water, so it ended with it. His side is pierced by the spear, and blood and water flow forth, twin emblems of baptism and of

martyrdom. After His resurrection also, when sending His apostles to the Gentiles, He commands them to baptize these in the mystery of the Trinity. The Jewish people repenting of their misdoing are sent forthwith by Peter to be baptized. Before Sion travails she brings forth children, and a nation is born at once. Paul the persecutor of the church, that ravening wolf out of Benjamin, bows his head before Ananias one of Christ's sheep, and only recovers his sight when he applies the remedy of baptism."

Isaiah 66:7-8, therefore, speaks of each of Mary's maternal events. Verse 7 regards Christ's Virgin Birth (see chart below under Redemption Accomplished / Physical Maternity). Isaiah 66:8, according to Jerome, regards the "new birth," or spiritual regeneration of Christians (see chart below under Redemption Applied Adoptive Maternity). However, there remains one category that is not covered by Isaiah 66:7-8, namely, Mary's second maternal event at the foot of the cross (see chart below under Redemption Accomplished Adoptive Maternity). What can be said of this event? Did Mary suffer labor pains at her second maternal event?

Dual Maternity	Redemption Accomplished	Redemption Applied
Mary -> (Physical Maternity)	Christ (Virgin Birth) (God unites with us) +	
(Adoptive Maternity) ²	Christ's Body (Cross) (God unites us with himself)	< - > Christians (Regeneration)

Daughter Zion in Travail

The joyful and painless birth in Isaiah 66:7-8 doesn't fit the context of the crucifixion at all. Mary endured terrible anguish and grief at the foot of the Cross while witnessing her Son's passion and execution. Yet, in the midst of all this suffering, she becomes a mother again through Christ.

If physical childbirth brings about physical labor pains, could Mary's interior suffering in some way be connected with her second maternal event at the foot of the Cross? Does Scripture ever liken interior suffering or anguish to the pains of childbirth? It certainly does.

Scripture uses terms like “travailing in labor,” “birth pangs,” and “labor pains,” in two ways: literally and metaphorically. The literal use concerns the physical pain of childbirth. The metaphorical use is sometimes applied to spiritual or psychological suffering (the interior suffering of the soul).

The prophet Jeremiah metaphorically described Daughter Zion’s suffering as travailing in labor when he wrote:

"For I heard a cry as of a woman in labor, The anguish as of one giving birth to her first child, The cry of the daughter of Zion gasping for breath, Stretching out her hands, saying, 'Ah, woe is me, for I faint before murderers'" (Jeremiah 4:31).

Earlier in Jeremiah, God had warned Jerusalem that if they did not circumcise their hearts He would permit the Babylonians to invade and carry them off into captivity (Jeremiah 4:4-7). Instead of the peace promised by the false prophets, God would bring such conflict that “the sword reacheth even to the soul” (Jeremiah 4:10). Later, Jeremiah likens the people of Jerusalem’s cries of anguish to the cry of a woman in labor about to give birth:

"For I heard a cry as of a woman in labor, The anguish as of one giving birth to her first child, The cry of the daughter of Zion gasping for breath..."

Why is Daughter Zion in anguish? The prophet writes:

"Stretching out her hands, saying, 'Ah, woe is me, for I faint before murderers.'"

The personification of Jerusalem, Daughter Zion, cries out as a woman in labor and fainting because she finds herself in the midst of murderers.

The Hour of Childbirth

Christ uses the same metaphor for the anguish His disciples will experience during His passion and crucifixion:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you" (John 16:20-22).

The disciples did not suffer physically. Rather, grief and anguish had afflicted their souls. Jesus likens the interior affliction of His disciples to a woman in travail at the hour of her child’s delivery. Their grief, like the pain of childbirth, will be short-lived since it will be replaced by joy “that a child has been born into the world.”

Here again is Christ’s “hour,” namely, His passion and crucifixion (John 2:4, 7:30, 8:20,

12:23, 27; 13:1, 16:32, 17:1). At Cana, John referred to Christ's crucifixion as His wedding feast where He would perform the Bridegroom's duty. In John 16, Christ's disciples' interior suffering is likened to the "hour" when a woman gives birth. Christ's "hour," therefore, is the "hour" of His disciples' metaphorical labor pains. If this is a fit description of the disciples' interior anguish and grief during Christ's hour, how much more fitting is it for Christ's mother who becomes a mother again in that same hour?

Zechariah prophesied about the crucifixion and the sorrow and anguish of Christ's disciples. He wrote that God will "...pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10).

Like Jesus, the prophet describes the disciples' interior suffering in maternal terms. Only the prophet's description is more specific. The disciples suffered as if they were Christ's mother. He says, "...they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and...weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn."

Christ's words (John 16:20-22) and especially Zechariah's prophecy (Zechariah 12:10) describe the interior suffering of Christ's disciples during the passion and crucifixion, but these words are most fully realized in the interior suffering of the Virgin Mary at the foot of the Cross. Indeed, Christ's disciples may have suffered like someone who lost a firstborn and only son, but Mary suffered because she actually did lose her firstborn and only son (Luke 2:7).

Did Mary travail in labor pain at her second maternity at the foot of the Cross? We have good biblical grounds to believe that metaphorically she did. If Christ's disciples' interior suffering can be likened to a woman at the hour of her birth, the same metaphor can be applied to Mary, especially in light of Zechariah 12:10.

A Sword Will Pierce Even Your Own Soul

One may be tempted to dismiss Mary's travailing at the foot of the cross as a mere biblical deduction or some sort of coincidence. Scripture suggests that it is something important. So important, in fact, that Simeon prophesied its coming:

"...Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed— and a sword will pierce even your own soul [Mary]—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35).

In the same breath that Simeon speaks of Christ's being "a sign to be opposed," he prophesied to Mary that "a sword will pierce even your own soul." This is not a literal sword since swords pierce the flesh not the soul. It is a metaphor for deep interior suffering, suffering so great that, to use the words of Jeremiah, it "touches our very soul"

(Jeremiah 4:10).

Jesus' opponents opposed Him His whole public life, but their opposition reached its climax at the crucifixion. It is at that hour that Simeon's prophecy to Mary was fulfilled, "a sword will pierce even your own soul." What was this sword? It must have been the anguish of witnessing the suffering and affliction of her firstborn Son.

Joy and Sorrow

Mary's two maternal events are different and they, in a sense, counter-balance each other. Christ's birth in Bethlehem was painless and filled with joy since she knew that the child born to her was the Son of the Most High God (Luke 1:32). Mary's second maternal event at the foot of the Cross was painful and sorrowful (Zechariah 12:10, Luke 2:34-35, and John 16:20-22), not only because she witnessed the torture and death of her firstborn, but she also knew who her firstborn was, God made flesh.

As the early Christian writer, John Damascene, explains:

"For, as pleasure did not precede it [Christ's birth], pain did not follow it, according to the prophet who says, 'Before she travailed she brought forth, and again, before her pain came she was delivered of a man-child' (Isaiah 66:7)...But this blessed woman, who was deemed worthy of gifts that are supernatural, suffered those pains, which she escaped at the birth [in Bethlehem], in the hour of the passion, enduring from motherly sympathy the rending of the bowels, and when she beheld Him, Whom she knew to be God by the manner of His generation, killed as a malefactor, her thoughts pierced her as a sword, and this is the meaning of this verse: Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also. But the joy of the resurrection transforms the pain, proclaiming Him, Who died in the flesh, to be God."

The labor pains that Mary escaped in Bethlehem came about at the foot of the Cross. The knowledge that her son is the Son of the Most High God and Savior which brought her joy in Bethlehem, became the sword that pierced her soul at Golgotha. According to John Damascene, Mary's suffering was twofold: She suffered as a mother who mourned over the loss of her firstborn and only son and she also suffered as Christ's disciple knowing that in the passion and crucifixion the people treated God as a criminal. The joyful revelation of the coming of Emmanuel (God with us) became the sorrow of watching the wicked "...put to death the Prince of Life" (Acts 3:15).

Stabat Mater

Mary provides a unique biblical vantage point for understanding and prayerfully meditating on the life of Christ. She was there at the Annunciation and Virgin Birth. She lived with Christ and witnessed His public ministry. She was at the foot of the Cross and Pentecost. Her perspective is particularly profound in meditating on Christ's passion and death. As noted above, Zechariah prophesied the interior suffering of those who viewed

the Pierced One as a mother viewing the death of her firstborn son.

The profundity of Mary's perspective on Christ's life may help make sense of some Marian Catholic devotions. The rosary, for example, is a form of prayer that provides a program for meditation and contemplation of Christ's life and work through Mary's eyes. It divides Christ's life into four sections called mysteries. Each mystery has five events to meditate over prayerfully. There are the Joyful Mysteries surrounding Christ's birth, the Luminous Mysteries of Christ's manifestation to the world, the Sorrowful Mysteries surrounding Christ's passion and crucifixion, and the Glorious Mysteries concerning the Resurrection and glorification. By studying, meditating upon, and contemplating these events in salvation history, we too, like Mary, ponder all these things in our hearts (Luke 2:19, 51) and learn to love Christ as His mother and first disciple did.

Since the interior suffering of the disciples reflects Mary's suffering, it is not surprising that there are quite a few Marian devotions that are popular for Lent. For example, some Catholics benefit from meditating on Christ's life and work by considering the Seven Sorrows of Mary as their guide. (These sorrows are the prophecy of Simeon, the flight into Egypt, losing the Child Jesus at the temple, Jesus carrying His cross, the crucifixion, the reception of the body of Jesus from the cross, the body of Jesus being placed in the tomb.) There are Lenten hymns as well, which also view Christ through Mary's eyes. One such hymn is Stabat Mater Dolorosa (The Sorrowful Mother Stood). These hymns are not sung to Mary or in honor of Mary, but they, like the other Marian devotions, are meant to place the believer in prayer at the foot of the Cross to contemplate God's love for us through His mother's eyes. By doing so, the believer can truly plumb the depths of what Zechariah 12:10 had prophesied, more fully appreciating the debt Christ paid on the Cross for us, so that we may more fully rejoice in Christ's resurrection at Easter.

In Summary

** Mary's dual maternity is unique because Christ is unique. Only Jesus can be both the Head and the Body. Since Christ came exclusively from Mary by the Virgin Birth and the Church came exclusively from Christ at the Cross, Mary is uniquely the mother of both the Head and the Body.*

** No other person or group of people, even on a symbolic level, can match Mary's dual maternity.*

** Our unity with Christ is established primarily through two events; the Incarnation (where God unites Himself to us) and the Cross (where Christ unites us to Himself).*

** Both the Incarnation and the Crucifixion are inextricably linked. The flesh and blood assumed at the Incarnation from Mary is the same flesh Christ offered on the cross. The Incarnation without the Cross is incomplete and the Cross without the Incarnation is not possible.*

** Mary has a special maternal role at each event.*

** Mary became a mother when she conceived Jesus at the Incarnation and she became a mother again at the foot of the cross when Jesus said to her, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’” (John 19:25-27).*

** Several passages of Scripture speak to Mary’s second maternity at the foot of the Cross. The Cross is likened to a wedding feast where Christ is the bridegroom (Matthew 9:15, Mark 2:19-20, Luke 5:34-35, John 2:4, and Ephesians 5). At a wedding, the parents of the bride and groom receive a new child into their family. Mary, the mother of Christ, receives the beloved disciples as her son.*

** The chiasmus in Galatians 4:3-7 links Christ’s being “born of a woman” with our adoption as sons.*

** Mary’s first maternity at the Incarnation was physical and biological. Mary’s second maternity at the foot of the Cross was because of Christ uniting Himself with the Church as His Body.*

** The Virgin Birth of Christ in Bethlehem was joyful and painless (Isaiah 66:7-10), while her second maternity at Golgotha was sorrowful and with great spiritual affliction.*

** Scripture uses the metaphor of “labor pain” or “travailing” for intense spiritual anguish, much like what Mary experienced at the foot of the cross (John 16:20-21).*

** Simeon prophesied of Mary’s suffering at the foot of the Cross when he said, “...a sword will pierce even your own soul [Mary]—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed” (Luke 2:34-35).*

** Mary’s perspective provides a unique biblical vantage point for meditating and contemplating the events of the gospel, most especially Christ’s passion and crucifixion. Marian devotions provide believers the opportunity to take advantage of this perspective and to prayerfully ponder the mysteries of God in their hearts, much like Mary did (Luke 2:19, 51).*

Chapter 10 A Great Sign Appears in Heaven

The original title for this book was going to be Mary: In the Beginning and the End because the Bible begins with a prophecy about Jesus and Mary (Genesis 3:15) and it ends with a revelation about Jesus and Mary (Revelation 12). Of course, the Bible has a lot to say about the Virgin Mary between Genesis and Revelation. The prophetic thread begins with God's perfect plan of redemption and the First Gospel; it continues with the prophetic "trigger sign" of the New Covenant and rebuilding of the kingdom; there are also the office of Queen Mother and prophecies about Daughter Zion; and it finally concludes with the Woman of Revelation 12.

Interpreting the Book of Revelation can be a daunting task. No other book in Scripture is more difficult to understand (and more varied in its interpretation) than the Book of Revelation. Its symbolism contains multiple layers of meaning and plumbing its depths, even for a single chapter, is beyond the scope of our investigation. Therefore, this chapter will limit its examination of Revelation 12 to only those prophetic themes already explored in this book. When all of these themes are brought together, the accumulative evidence will show that Mary is the primary, literal, historical, and, perhaps, exclusive fulfillment of the Woman of Revelation 12.

Creation In Genesis

The first and broadest theme in Revelation 12 harkens back to the creation narratives of Genesis 1-3. For example, the chapter contains several elements and characters found at the beginning of Genesis. It references the sun and moon, the stars, heaven and earth, land and sea, all as God, the Woman, Her Seed, and the ancient Serpent. [\[249\]](#) All of these are mentioned in the first three chapters of Genesis. Indeed, many of these elements are present in the first verse of Revelation 12. The Woman is clothed with the sun, crowned with twelve stars, and the moon is under her feet.

Commentators are divided on the meaning of this description. One plausible explanation may be that Revelation 12:1 is describing an astrological phenomenon, that is the placement of the stars, sun, and moon in Bethlehem the day of Christ's birth. [\[250\]](#) Another possible interpretation, although more problematic, is that Revelation is using elements taken from Genesis 37:9-10 for the Woman's apparel.

Genesis 37:9-10 concerns Joseph's dream about his brothers and parents. The passage reads:

"Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, 'Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.' He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, 'What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?'"

What makes Genesis 37:9-10 problematic as a background text for Revelation 12:1 is its meaning, or lack of meaning. All these elements had a very specific meaning in Joseph's dream. Jacob (Israel) and Rachel are symbolized by the sun and moon. The eleven stars are Joseph's eleven brothers. All of these symbols are doing something; they bow before Joseph. When this meaning is imported into the same elements of Revelation 12:1, the result is incomprehensible gibberish. What would the moon under the Woman's feet mean? According to the symbolism of Genesis 37:9-10, it would mean that the Woman subjugated or ruled over her mother! Even if this were true, the Woman's mother (or father or brothers) are never identified. In Joseph's dream, these symbols bow down to him. There is no such action in Revelation 12:1. They only surround and adorn the Woman.

Another possible background text may be Song of Songs 6:9-10 [8-9], which reads:

"But my dove, my perfect one, is unique: She is her mother's only daughter; She is the pure child of the one who bore her The maidens saw her and called her blessed, The queens and the concubines also, and they praised her, saying, Who is this that grows like the dawn, As beautiful as the full moon, As pure as the sun, As awesome as an army with banners?"

The last line translated "As awesome as an army with banners" can be translated, "as majestic as the stars in procession" (NIV). [\[251\]](#) If the last line refers to stars then all the elements of Revelation 12:1 are present and accounted for in Song of Songs. This text would suggest that the Woman of Revelation 12 a personification of the Bride of the King. [\[252\]](#)

Regardless of what text, if any, Revelation 12:1 is using, it is enough to affirm that the Woman is adorned with all the luminous bodies of Creation (sun, moon, and stars) in Genesis 1. The Woman is a sign that appears in heaven (Revelation 12:1). Why use these elements? Since Scripture often associates glory with visible light or brightness (cf. Isaiah 60:1, 19; Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29; Revelation 21:23), perhaps they were meant to suggest that Woman is adorned and crowned with glory, much like Adam was crowned "with glory and majesty" (Psalms 8:3-8, 1 Corinthians 11:7-9). If so, the Woman (corresponding to the Woman of Genesis 2-3) would be like Eve in all her glory before it was lost in the Fall.

Although all of these interpretations are possible, not all are equally plausible. The reader is free to decide which interpretation, if any, makes sense. What is important is to recognize the presence of all these elements from Genesis 1-3. The next theme to be examined is the First Gospel, Genesis 3:15.

Genesis 3:15 – The First Gospel

After the Fall of Adam, God curses the Serpent by promising that He will reverse everything the Serpent has achieved. In the beginning God created Adam and the

Woman in His friendship and gave them dominion over the earth. But the Serpent through his lie befriended our first parents and led them to rebel against God, so that through fallen humanity the Serpent achieved dominion over the earth.

The passage reads:

"And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel" (Genesis 3:15).

Revelation 12 robustly employs many elements of the First Gospel. It uses the same characters: the Woman (Revelation 12:1, 4, 6, 13-17), "Her Seed" (Revelation 12:2-5, 17), the Serpent (Revelation 12:9, 14, 15), and even perhaps also the Serpent's Seed (Revelation 12:4, 7, 9). The twelfth chapter also depicts enmity and warfare just as Genesis 3:15. The Serpent (Dragon) is at enmity or war with both the Woman (Revelation 12:13, 15) and Her Seed, Christ, the "male-child" (Revelation 12:4).[\[253\]](#)

The First Gospel prophesies the Serpent's defeat when his head is crushed under the foot of the Woman's Seed. Revelation 12 also depicts the Serpent's defeat, only here the Woman's Seed, the male-child, conquer the Dragon (Devil) when He is caught up to heaven and casts the Dragon down to earth (Revelation 12:5, 7-10). The Woman's Seed (Christians) also conquer the Devil by the "blood of the lamb" and the word of their testimony or martyrdom (Revelation 12:11). Although victory is achieved, the battle continues.

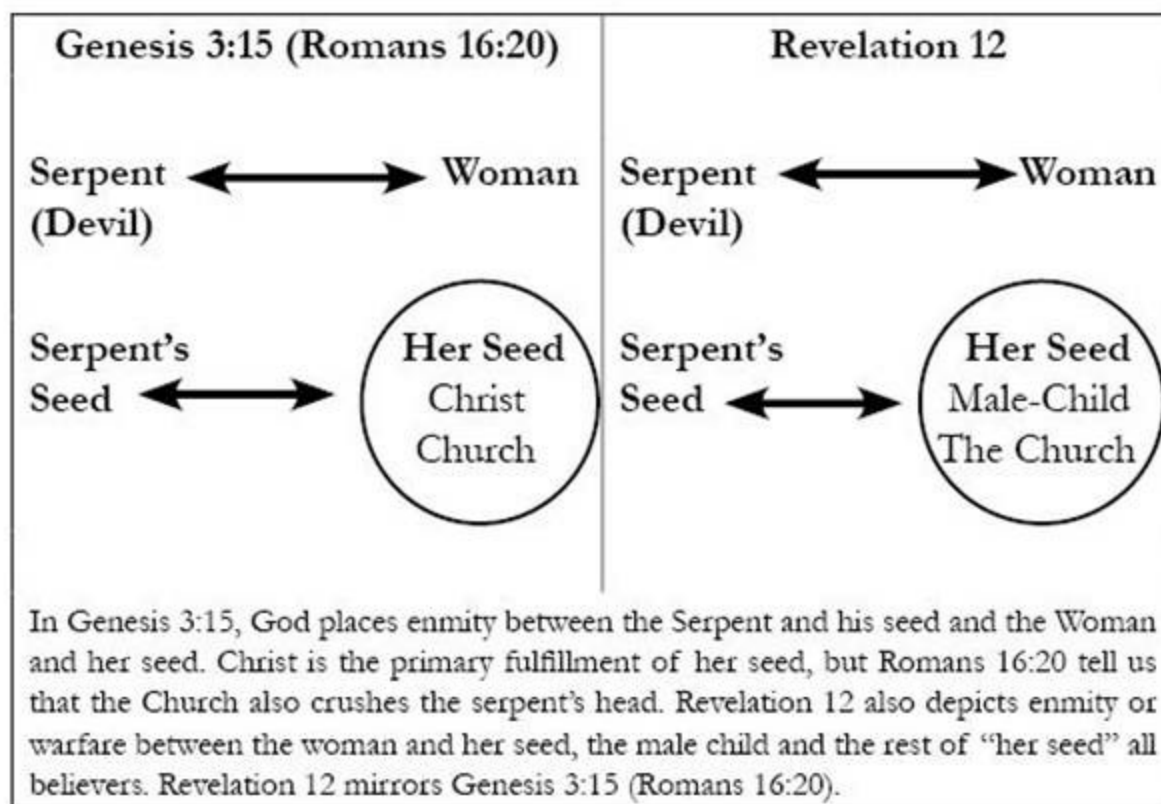
Genesis 3:15 presents two kingdoms or dominions in conflict. The Woman's Seed destroys the power of the Devil and re-establishes God's dominion. Revelation 12 has two kingdoms in conflict as well. The Woman's Seed (Christ, the male-child) establishes God's dominion in heaven, and it is extended by Her Seed (Christians) on earth (Revelation 12:7-12).[\[254\]](#)

It is here also the First Gospel and Revelation 12 shares a unique feature. As seen earlier, the Woman's Seed is Christ. He is the primary, literal, historic, fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 and He alone crushes the head of the Serpent. However, God also crushes the Serpent's head under the feet of all Christians since they are members of Christ's Body (Romans 16:20). The Woman's Seed takes on a duality. The same is true, as we will see in detail later, with Revelation 12. The Woman gives birth to only one child, the male-child, Christ (Revelation 12:5). At the end of the chapter, however, the Dragon (Devil) wages war against Her Seed (the same Greek words used in Genesis 3:15 LXX), which represent all Christians "...who keep God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 12:17).[\[255\]](#)

The Woman, Her Seed, and the Serpent

If Revelation 12 uses the same characters and general actions as Genesis 3:15, there is

Figure 8



every reason to believe the same people are involved in Revelation 12 as well. The primary, literal, historical fulfillments of each character in Genesis 3:15 were: The Serpent is the Devil or Satan, the Woman's Seed is Christ Jesus (Head and Body), and the Serpent's seed could be either all wicked people and angels (demons), the anti-Christ, or both. The Woman is the Virgin Mary (see Figure 8).

Revelation 12 confirms the Dragon represents Satan "the great serpent of old...who deceives the world" (Revelation 12:9). This is an undoubted reference to Satan as the Serpent in Genesis 3. The male-child is Christ since he rules and shepherds all nations with an "iron rod" (compare Psalms 2:9) and He ascends to God's throne. The Serpent's seed (Dragon's seed) may be Satan's angels who were thrown from heaven with him (Revelation 12:9) and implicitly all the wicked as well since they persecute Christians (Revelation 12:11-12). The Woman, therefore, is the Virgin Mary since she gave birth to Christ (Revelation 12:5). The "trigger sign" of the Davidic Kingdom's restoration is present in Revelation 12 as well.

The Trigger Sign and the Davidic Monarchy

The first verse of chapter 12 announces that a "great sign" has appeared in heaven. [\[256\]](#) What is this "great sign?" It is a Woman who is "with child" and about to give birth (Revelation 12:1-2). God promised through the prophets to provide a sign to show that

God was beginning to restore the Davidic Kingdom. That sign is that a woman would give birth to a son. The first verse of this prophetic thread may be found even in Genesis 3:15 where the Woman's Seed crushes the head of the Serpent. As mentioned in Chapter 5, identifying the Messiah as "Her Seed" could be a prophecy of the Virgin Birth of Christ.

More certain, however, is one of the most prominent prophecies about Christ's birth in Isaiah 7:11-14. David's Kingdom is in a crisis when God promises to deliver King Ahaz if he follows His instructions. Isaiah says to King Ahaz:

"Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!'... '[T]he Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.'" (Isaiah 7:11-12,14). [\[257\]](#)

God's sign of deliverance, which is as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven, is that "...a virgin will be with child and bear a son..." The same "great sign" found in Revelation 12:1-2.

Likewise, Micah's sign that God is restoring the Davidic Kingdom is that a promised woman will be in labor, who will give birth to a King:

"Therefore He will give them up until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel. And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the Lord, In the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they will remain" (Micah 5:3-4 [2-3]).

Jeremiah echoed the great sign God promised in Isaiah 7:14 when he said that God would do something new on the earth, "a woman will encompass a man" (Jeremiah 31:22). What was this? It was Mary's virgin birth of Christ. [\[258\]](#)

After announcing the "great sign," Revelation 12 repeatedly calls the reader's attention to this "trigger sign." Five times, the next twelve verses mention that the Woman is "with child" and/or that she is giving birth. Four of these five instances take place in the first five verses:

"...she was with child...cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth" (Revelation 12:2).

"And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth..." (Revelation 12:4).

"And she gave birth to a son..." (Revelation 12:5).

"...her child was caught up to God..." (Revelation 12:5).

"The woman who gave birth to the male child..." (Revelation 12:13).

The great sign of Revelation 12:1-2 and the “trigger sign” that God is restoring the Davidic Kingdom are identical. Yet, Revelation is not done with the reader, it gives another sign that the Woman of Revelation 12 is the Virgin Mary. Mary alone is the promised Woman who gives birth to the Messiah King. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the sign that God is going to restore the Kingdom could not be an intangible metaphor. Otherwise, how would God’s people recognize it and know their deliverance was at hand? The Queen Mother had to be a real person since she would function as a physical, tangible sign of the King’s right to the throne. The Woman of Revelation 12, therefore, must be a real individual who fulfilled this “trigger sign,” the Virgin Mary.

“With Child”

The language Revelation 12 uses to describe the “trigger sign” also has connections with Mary and the Virgin Birth. For example, the exact Greek phrase translated “being with child” (Greek, en gastri echousa) in Revelation 12:2 is used in Matthew 1:18:

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child [en gastri echousa] by the Holy Spirit."

It is used again in Matthew 1:21-23 where he cites Isaiah 7:14:

"‘She will bear a Son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save his people from their sins.’ Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child [Greek, en gastri hexei] and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us’" (Matthew 1:21-23).

Luke’s portrayal of Gabriel’s words to Mary uses a similar phrase:

"Behold, you [Mary] will conceive in your womb [Greek, syllempse en gastri] and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus" (Luke 1:31).

The other four uses refer to women in Christ’s eschatological discourse (Matthew 24:19, Mark 13:17, Luke 21:23) and as a metaphor to describe the quickness of the Second Coming (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

“Bring forth”

There are two important “trigger sign” prophecies that reference the promised Woman “bearing” or “bringing forth” a son. Both of them use the Greek word tikto. For example, Isaiah 7:14 (as quoted by Matthew) reads:

"Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear [Greek, texetai] a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us’" (Matthew 1:22-23).

Micah 5:2 [3] LXX emphasizes this same word in his “trigger sign” prophecy when he wrote, “When she who is in labor has borne a child.” Micah uses two forms of the word “bear” (Greek, tikto) so that it literally reads, “Until the time she who brings forth will bring forth” (Greek, “heos kairou tiktouses texetai”).

There are eighteen occurrences of tikto in the New Testament. Five are found in Revelation 12:

Revelation 12:2, “and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth (Greek, tekein).

Revelation 12:4, “...woman who was about to give birth (Greek, tekein), so that when she gave birth (Greek, teke) he might devour her child.”

Revelation 12:5, “And she gave birth [Greek, eteken] to a son, a male child...”

Revelation 12:13, “...he persecuted the woman who gave birth [Greek, eteken] to the male child.”

Eight occurrences are used for Mary’s birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:21, 23, 25; 2:2; Luke 1:31, 2:6, 7, 11) and once with the birth of John (Luke 1:57). The remaining four uses are metaphors. [259] The two largest clusters of “bring forth” (tikto) are the Virgin Birth of Christ (8 occurrences) and the Woman of Revelation 12 (5 occurrences). Thematically, therefore, the Woman of Revelation 12 being “with child” and “bringing forth” a son has a significant overlap with Mary’s giving birth to Jesus in the Gospels.

The presence and emphasis of the “trigger sign” of the restoration of the Kingdom in Revelation 12 as well as its obvious connection with the Mary’s Virgin Birth of Christ once again points us to Mary’s being the primary, literal, historical fulfillment of the Woman of Revelation 12.

The Davidic Kingdom

The “trigger sign” of the restoration signals the beginning of the reign of the Davidic King, the Messiah. This theme is also present in Revelation 12. For example, Revelation 12:5 says:

"And she [the Woman] gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron..." [260]

This is a reference the “iron rod” mentioned in Psalms 2:

“But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.’ I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware’” (Psalms 2:6-9). [261]

God will install His King on mount Zion. God's Son, the King, will shepherd the nations "with an iron rod" (Psalm 2:9). The messianic character of it is unmistakable and New Testament confirms that it is fulfilled in Jesus, the son of David and true Messiah King (Acts 13:32-33, Hebrews 1:5, 5:5).

In Revelation 12:5 the male child born of the Woman rules with an iron rod and is "caught up to God and His throne." This is an unmistakable reference to the enthronement of the Messiah King in Psalms 2:6-9.

In verse 10, a great voice proclaims:

"...Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come..."

The enthronement of the Messianic King is the manifestation of God's dominion, authority, and power. The Dragon (Devil) is then cast down from Heaven.

The "trigger sign" of a Woman conceiving and giving birth is the first sign of the messianic kingdom. Her child is the Anointed, the Son of David and the Son of God. His birth and enthronement re-establish the promised Kingdom.

The Queen Mother

In the Davidic Kingdom, dynastic succession passes from the King to his son through the Queen Mother, who gave birth to him. The "trigger sign" of the restoration of the Kingdom is the Queen Mother of the Messiah, the true Son of David and the true King of Israel. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of David, and the Messiah King. Mary is His Queen Mother.

Since the "trigger sign" of the restoration of the kingdom is featured throughout Revelation 12, it follows that the Woman of the male child is in some way the Queen Mother. But is there evidence for this?

As demonstrated earlier, the male child, by ruling with an iron rod, is Jesus Christ, the Davidic King, and true Son of David. The Woman is His mother (Revelation 12:5). Since dynastic succession in the Davidic monarchy passes through the Queen Mother, the Woman must be His Queen Mother. If this is not the case and the Woman is not a Queen Mother, then Jesus did not inherit David's throne, but started a new dynastic line, which would contradict Scripture (2 Samuel 7:13, 1 Kings 2:45, 8:25, 9:5, 2 Chronicles 6:16, 7:18, Psalms 132:11-12, Isaiah 9:6 [7], Jeremiah 33:17, Luke 1:32-33).

Another indication that the Woman is the Queen Mother is that she wears the sign of her office, a crown. She is crowned with twelve stars (Revelation 12:1). Within the Davidic monarchy, only three officeholders wore crowns, the King, his queen(s), and the Queen Mother (Jeremiah 13:18). Since the Woman cannot be the King, nor can she be His queen or concubine (because she gave birth to Him), the crowned Woman must be Christ's

Queen Mother.

But is the Woman of Revelation 12 a real person or is she merely a symbol? Since she is a Queen Mother, she cannot be merely a symbol. The office of Queen Mother served an important function in the Davidic monarchy. She was a visible, tangible figure that guaranteed the King's legitimate right to the throne. Only a real woman from the house of David could function as the Queen Mother. A mere symbol or figure (such as the Old Testament or New Testament Church, or all the Elect) would defeat the very purpose of the office. Can you imagine someone asking a King, "What gives you the right to sit on the throne of David?" and the person answered, "My Queen Mother is the Old Testament Church!" or "My Queen Mother is the righteous poor of Israel," or "I am the son of the Elect!" None of these answers provides proof of succession. [262] Only a real person will do. The same is true for the "trigger sign" of the restoration of the Kingdom. The Woman must be a real, literal, historic person, the actual woman who gave birth to the King, or it isn't a sign. Both the Queen Mother and the "trigger sign" of the restoration must be a real person, and both are fulfilled in the Virgin Mary.

This does not mean that the Woman is devoid of all symbolic content. It only means that the primary, literal, historic fulfillment of the Woman must be Mary. Other secondary symbolic interpretations are possible. For example, the Woman can also be, in a secondary sense, Daughter Zion.

Daughter Zion and Dual Maternity

Just as Revelation 12 describes the Woman as the Queen Mother of the Messiah (who can only be a real, literal person and not a symbol), it, nevertheless, also describes the Woman as Daughter Zion, which is a collective symbol.

In Scripture, Daughter Zion is generally a personification of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. However, there are a few messianic passages, examined in chapter 8, where this symbol finds a unique fulfillment in a real person, the Virgin Mary.

The strongest of these texts is at work in Revelation 12 where the Woman gives birth to the male child (Revelation 12:5). This strongly resembles Daughter Zion's birth of the male child in Isaiah 66:7:

"Before she travailed, she brought forth; Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy" (Isaiah 66:7). [263]

The word translated "a boy" (Greek, arsen) in Isaiah 66:7 is the same Greek word used in Revelation 12:5, only Revelation emphasizes that the child is a "male" (Greek, huion arsen, male-son). [264]

Another feature that the Woman and Daughter Zion of Isaiah 66:7-9 share is the dual maternity. Daughter Zion gives birth to a single individual, the male child (verse 7), yet in

the very next verse she is said to give birth to a multitude, a nation (verse 8). This finds a parallel in Revelation 12:5 and 17. The Woman gives birth to only one individual, the male-child (verse 5), and yet later we find that “Her Seed” includes a multitude, all Christians (verse 17).

As stated earlier, only Christ can be both the Head and the Body. Therefore, the male child can be no one else but Jesus Christ. The same is true with Mary. She alone gave birth to Jesus, who is Head and Body. No other person, whether real or symbolic, can have this unique “dual maternity.” Therefore, the Woman is the Virgin Mary.

Answering Objections

One difficulty with Mary’s being the Woman of Revelation 12 is that the earliest commentators understood the Woman to be the Old Testament Church (or the Synagogue) and/or the New Testament Church. For example, Victorinus (d. 303), the first Latin commentator on Revelation, wrote:

“The woman...is the ancient Church of fathers, and prophets, and saints, and apostles, which had the groans and torments of its longing until it saw that Christ, the fruit of its people according to the flesh long promised to it, had taken flesh out of the selfsame people.”[\[265\]](#)

Likewise, Augustine wrote: “This Woman is the ancient City of God.”[\[266\]](#) Bede (d. 735) wrote, “The Church is clothed with the light of Christ, and treads upon temporal glory.”[\[267\]](#) Beatus (d. 776), wrote “Ever was this Woman, before the Lord’s advent, in travail.”[\[268\]](#)

If these early Christian commentators understood the Woman to be a collective symbol, how can she be a real person?

Although these commentaries interpret the Woman as a collective symbol, they do not pose a difficulty with what has been said. These commentators interpreted Revelation 12 according to its allegorical or spiritual sense, not its historic literal sense.[\[269\]](#) By doing so they avoided all of the anachronisms and other problems associated with interpreting the Woman as the Church, Old Testament or New. But we are looking at the historical literal sense of this passage. Therefore, there is no conflict since Revelation 12 can be interpreted in several senses, as was stated at the beginning of this chapter.

Exclusively Mary

The Virgin Mary is the primary, literal, historic fulfillment of the Woman of Revelation. Its use of the various themes examined in this book not only confirms this, but these themes point to Mary’s being the exclusive fulfillment as well.

The Queen Mother must be a real individual who gives birth to the Messiah, otherwise the title loses its meaning. The “trigger sign” of the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom is

a promised Woman who gives birth to the Messiah. That Woman is Mary, and only Mary.

Likewise, the dual maternity points to an exclusive fulfillment in Mary since only Christ is the Head and the Body of the Church. This means that the Woman cannot be anyone or anything other than Mary, even on a symbolic level. For example, the Woman cannot be the New Testament Church, since it would mean that Christ's Church existed before Christ and gave birth to Him (see Figure 9). The Old Testament is not exclusively the "mother" of Christ, but also the "mother" of all Jews. Therefore, "Her Seed" must include those who persecuted Christ and His Church, which contradicts Revelation 12.

No other woman, real or symbolic, individual or collective, fits the parameters of Revelation 12 as does Mary. She alone is the Queen Mother who gives birth to Christ. Her Seed alone is both the male-child (Christ) and the Church (Christ's Body). Mary is the Woman of Genesis 3:15 and the Woman of Revelation 12 (See figure 9).

Why Not Mary?

If all these themes point to Mary as the fulfillment, perhaps even the exclusive fulfillment, of the Woman of Revelation 12, why are some Christians reluctant to see Mary in this passage? Is it because they have an anti-Marian bias?

Some do. Others believe the inspired author of Revelation was too primitive to have had such a high theological view of Mary, so they ignore the possibility. The biggest obstacle for a Marian interpretation, however, seems to be Revelation 12:2, which reads:

"...and she [the Woman] was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth." [\[270\]](#)

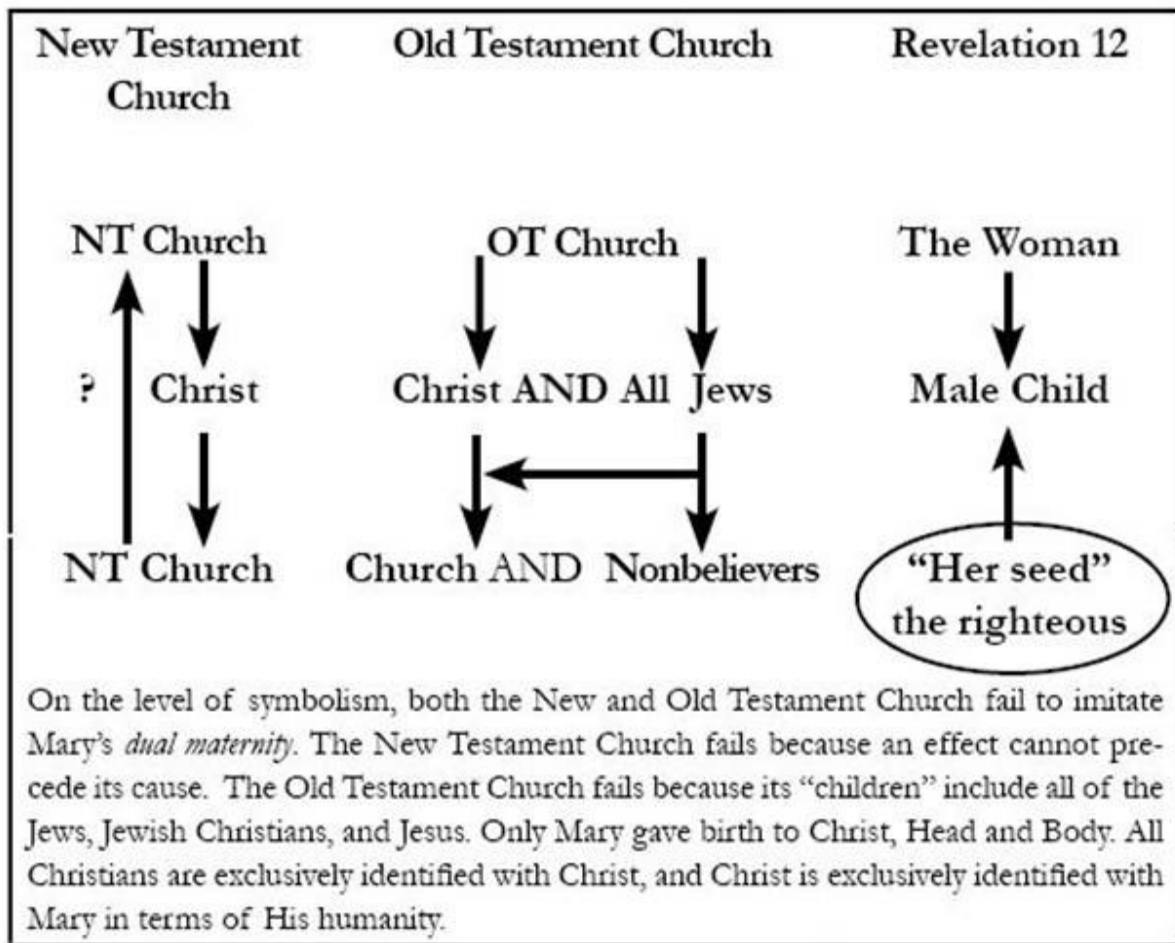
Why is this verse a stumbling block? There is an ancient and generally accepted view that Christ's birth was joyful and painless. But Revelation 12:2 describes the Woman as travailing with labor pains and crying out in agony. [\[271\]](#) This poses a difficulty for the Marian interpretation. If Mary is the Woman of Revelation 12 then the Virgin Birth was not painless and joyful, which contradicts the ancient understanding. To avoid this, some commentators either rule out the Marian interpretation or they affirm only a distant Marian fulfillment in the text.

A favorite alternative to Mary is Daughter Zion, and not without good reason. Revelation 12 does employ elements from Daughter Zion in its text. The most obvious being the birth of the male-child (compare Revelation 12:5 with Isaiah 66:7). Moreover, Daughter Zion and the Woman both exhibit a dual maternity (Isaiah 66:7-9, Revelation 12:5, 17). Daughter Zion, therefore, seems to be a good fit, except for one problem -- Daughter Zion's childbirth is also painless.

Symbols in Conflict

If painful childbirth excludes Mary from being the Woman, it must also exclude Daughter

Figure 9



Zion as well because Isaiah described Daughter Zion's birth of the male child as occurring before she had labor pain!

"Before she travailed, she brought forth; Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy" (Isaiah 66:7).[\[272\]](#)

Isaiah's description of Daughter Zion is a stark contradiction to the Woman in Revelation 12:2 who is travailing in pain and agony. Indeed, the belief that the Virgin Birth was painless largely came from Isaiah 66:7.[\[273\]](#) Therefore, if the presence of pain excludes Mary, it should exclude Daughter Zion as well.

We have a problem. The image of the Woman in Revelation 12 is undoubtedly Mary and also Daughter Zion, as depicted in Isaiah 66:7-8. However, Revelation 12:2 describes the Woman in such a way as to exclude both Mary and Daughter Zion from contention. Indeed, Revelation not only describes the Woman as travailing in labor, but emphasizes it by adding the word "agony" or "torment" (Greek, *basanizō*).[\[274\]](#) Why add "agony" or "torment" into the mix? Why would the Holy Spirit place these two births in such contrast? The solution may be found in the dual maternity of Mary and Daughter Zion.

Which Maternal Event?

Scripture sometimes conflates two events into one. A good example of this is Isaiah 66:7-9 where Daughter Zion gives birth at once to a male child (Isaiah 66:7) and to a nation (Isaiah 66:8). Christian revelation shows that this one event is really three: Christ's Incarnation and birth in Bethlehem, His death on the Cross, and throughout history when Christians receive the new birth. All of these events are related, but distinct. Perhaps Revelation 12 is also conflating two events as well.

We assumed that the birth of the male child is Christ's birth in Bethlehem (Revelation 12:5). But is that what is being depicted? Is the male child an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger? Not at all. The male child seems to be an adult, not an infant. [\[275\]](#) He is born and immediately enthroned in heaven:

"And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne."

There is no manger, no Epiphany, no childhood, and no public ministry. In one verse, Christ is born and enthroned in heaven. All this follows the Woman's travailing in torment and giving birth.

If Revelation 12:5 is not speaking of Christ's birth in Bethlehem, then what could it be depicting? There is an event in Scripture where Mary metaphorically suffers labor pains and becomes a mother again while Christ is "lifted up" and "enthroned." All this occurs on Golgotha during the crucifixion. [\[276\]](#)

The Cross in Revelation 12

We see several of these elements at work in John 12:31-33. Where it says:

"Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. [\[277\]](#)

On the cross, Christ is "lifted up from the earth" and he also "draws all men to" Himself. Jesus adds another element that is picked up in Revelation 12. When Jesus is lifted up on the Cross, the "ruler of this world will be cast out." Revelation 12:5 has the male child "caught up" to God's throne in heaven and four verses later, the Dragon (Devil) and his angels are cast out of heaven:

"And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him" (Revelation 12:9).

We can see this victory in Revelation 12:10 where it says, "...[N]ow the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the

accuser of our brethren has been thrown down..."

Again, these events do not seem to correspond to the Virgin Birth or the Ascension, but to the Cross, since it is there that Christ destroyed the power of the Devil:

"...that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Hebrews 2:14-15). [278]

Another reference that connects the events of Revelation 12 with the Cross is found in verse 11. Speaking of the saints who have overcome the Devil, it says:

"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death."

They overcame the Accuser by "the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony." Jesus is the Lamb of God and this reference to His blood refers to the Cross (John 1:29, 36; 1 Corinthians 5:7, 1 Peter 1:19).

All these events (the Woman's travails and becoming a mother again, the male child's being "lifted up" and the Judgment on the "ruler of this world," the Devil's being cast out of heaven, and the presence of the "blood of the lamb," in different ways point to the Cross of Christ.

Torment and Travail

*We saw in Chapter 9 that Scripture does indeed use "travail" or "labor pain" metaphorically to describe anguish and grieving. But what about the word translated "torment"? Is there any biblical justification for Mary's interior suffering also being described as "agony" or "torment" (Greek, *basanizō*)? Yes, there is.*

*Not unlike "travail" and "labor pain," "to be in agony" (*basanizo*) is sometimes used to describe intense interior suffering. For example, 2 Peter 2:7-8 uses "to be in torment" (*basanizo*) to describe the inner affliction of Lot:*

*"And if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented [*basanizo*] day after day by their lawless deeds)." [279]*

*Lot's torment was not physical, but interior. His "righteous soul" was tormented (*basanizo*) by witnessing the lawless deeds of unrighteous men. Indeed, Second Peter's use of *basanizo* is not very much different than Jeremiah's use of "travail" for Daughter Zion in Jeremiah 4:31:*

"For I heard a cry as of a woman in labor, The anguish as of one giving birth to her first child, The cry of the daughter of Zion gasping for breath, Stretching out her hands, saying, 'Ah, woe is me, for I [literally, my soul] faint before murderers.'" [280]

In both passages, the metaphor of “labor pains” and “torment” is interior, not their bodies. It involves the affliction of their souls (Greek, psyche), not their bodies, just as Simeon prophesied to Mary that a sword would pierce her soul (psyche) (Luke 2:35). Moreover, the cause of their souls’ affliction in all three examples (Lot, Daughter Zion, and Mary) is that they witnessed the lawless deeds of wicked men.

If Revelation 12:2 and 5 refer in some sense to the crucifixion, then the use of “travailing in labor” and “torment” would very aptly describe Mary’s interior affliction as she witnessed the brutality of Christ’s passion and death at the hands of the wicked.

Mary: The Woman in Travail

If Revelation 12 concerns the crucifixion, what an odd way to describe it! Why describe it in terms of a childbirth? Perhaps the author is saying something important about Mary. Her “yes” to Gabriel allowed the Incarnation to take place and the crucifixion as well, since the flesh and blood that God assumed came exclusively from Mary. The cross is also the place of Mary’s second maternity, where Christ draws all men to Himself in one Body. Therefore, Mary is intimately associated with Christ in the Incarnation, His passion and death, His enthronement, the extension of His dominion over Satan and his angels, and His Body the Church. As the early Christian writer Cyril of Alexandria wrote:

"We salute you [Mary], for in your holy womb he who is beyond all limitation was confined. Because of you the holy Trinity is glorified and adored; the cross is called precious and is venerated throughout the world; the heavens exult; the angels and archangels make merry; demons are put to flight; the devil, that tempter, is thrust down from heaven...believers receive holy baptism; the oil of gladness is poured out; the Church is established through the world."[\[281\]](#)

Cyril’s praises of Mary mirror, to some extent, elements found in Revelation 12. For example, Cyril praises Mary in that through her womb, Christ came, and won redemption on the Cross, just as the Woman gave birth to the male child who is enthroned (Revelation 12:5). Cyril says that the devil is thrust down from heaven, just as in Revelation 12:9. Likewise, the angels and archangels rejoice (Revelation 12:12), and the Church is established (Revelation 12:10-11, 17).

By praising Mary in light of what Christ has done, Cyril’s thoughts flow like those of Revelation 12. He starts at the Incarnation, jumps to the cross and all that flows from it, namely, heaven rejoicing, the Devil cast down, Christians regenerated, and the Church established. Revelation 12 also begins with the Woman’s giving birth to the male child, jumps to His enthronement, and all that flows from it, namely, heaven rejoicing, Satan being cast down, Christians overcoming the Accuser by the blood of the lamb, and the Woman’s Seed waging war against the Dragon.

Not only does the crucifixion fit the context of Revelation 12, it also resolves the problem of how Mary and Daughter Zion can experience “labor pain” and “torment” while giving

birth. Since the painless Virgin Birth (Isaiah 66:7-8) does not seem to be the primary meaning of Revelation 12, then there is no longer conflict. Instead, there is reference to Mary's second maternal event at the foot of the cross, an event filled with interior suffering and sorrow, where Christ the Head takes to Himself the Church as His Bride.

Conclusion

Each prophetic layer examined in this chapter points to Mary as the Woman. The First Gospel (Genesis 3:15) is an especially predominant theme in Revelation 12. Mary is the Woman of the First Gospel. Mary is the Woman of Revelation 12. Her Seed is Christ and all Christians in the First Gospel (cf. Romans 16:20) and Her Seed is Christ (the male child) and all Christians in Revelation 12 (Revelation 12:5, 17). Mary is the "trigger sign" of the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom and she is the "trigger sign" in Revelation 12:2, 4, 5, and 13. Christ is the Messiah King and Mary is His Queen Mother. The male child is the Messiah King and the crowned Woman of Revelation 12 is His Queen Mother. Daughter Zion, who gives birth to the male child, finds a unique fulfillment in Mary. The Woman, who, like Daughter Zion, gives birth to the male child (Isaiah 66:7), also finds a unique fulfillment in Mary. Mary is the mother of Christ, who is the Head and the Body. The Woman is the mother of the male child and all Christians (Revelation 12:5, 17). Other people and entities may be the Woman in some allegorical or spiritual sense, but Mary alone is the Woman in the primary, literal historical sense.

What does Revelation 12 teach us about Mary? First, it provides an explicit text affirming that Mary is bodily in heaven. Unlike the souls underneath the altar crying out for God's justice (Revelation 6:9), the Woman has a head, feet, and a clothed body (Revelation 12:1). Second, the chapter also broadly affirms God's direct intervention in preserving Mary from the attacks of the Devil. She is given two eagle's wings to flee from the Dragon (Revelation 12:14) and the earth protects her from the Dragon's flood waters (Revelation 12:15-16). Revelation 12 also confirms Mary's Queenship. Like the Queen Mother in the Davidic monarchy, she is crowned and her well being is directly linked to the King. In Revelation 12, Mary is crowned and the Dragon wages war, not only against Christ, the male child, but against Mary, the Queen Mother, as well.

In Summary

** The twelfth chapter of Revelation employs all of the biblical themes examined in this book. Each theme adds a new layer of meaning that reveals the identity of the Woman.*

** The theme of Genesis 3:15 is the most prominent of all themes in Revelation 12. Both passages have the same characters (God, the Woman, Her seed (both individual and all Christians) the Serpent (Dragon) and his seed (the fallen angels). Both have the same enmity (the Serpent and his seed are at war with the Woman and the male-child and the Church). Since the Woman of Genesis 3:15 can only be Mary, the Woman of Revelation*

12 must also be Mary.

** The “trigger sign” of the restoration of the Davidic messianic Kingdom is a woman giving birth to the King. Mary’s birth of Christ is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament “trigger signs” of the restoration (Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:14 LXX, 11:1, Micah 5:2 [3], Jeremiah 31:22). The “great sign” of Revelation 12:1-2 is the Woman giving birth to the King. Since the child born is undoubtedly Jesus Christ the Messiah (compare Revelation 12:5 and Psalms 2:9), the Woman must be Mary.*

** The Woman of Revelation 12 is crowned (Revelation 12:1) and she is the mother of the male child (Revelation 12:5). Only one person in David’s Kingdom was crowned and the mother of the King, the Great Lady or Queen Mother. Since the male-child is Christ, the Messiah King, Mary must be the Woman, His Queen Mother.*

** Since one of the main functions of the Queen Mother was to be the real, tangible, biological, embodiment of the King’s royal lineage, there is no real possibility of a Queen Mother’s being merely symbolic since such an absurdity could only be viewed as perpetrating some sort of fraud. Therefore, all corporate symbols or symbolic interpretations of the Woman (such as the Old or New Testament Church, all women, all the elect, and others) must be ruled out. The Queen Mother must be the real, biological, actual mother of the King, and there is only one person who can claim that title, Mary.*

** Revelation 12 employs Daughter Zion (mainly from Isaiah 66:7-9) imagery as well. The Woman and Daughter Zion both give birth to a male-child (Isaiah 66:7, Revelation 12:5) and both have a dual maternity (Isaiah 66:7-9, Revelation 12:5 and 17). Since Christ alone is, in one person, the Head and the Body (the Church), His mother possesses, by extension, a dual maternity. Since no other person (even symbolically) can match this dual maternity, the Woman of Revelation 12 must be Mary.*

** The biggest obstacle to a Marian interpretation is that the Woman travails in labor and “torment” while giving birth to the male-child (Revelation 12:2). Since the Virgin Birth is generally understood as being painless and joyful (according to Isaiah 66:7-9 and the New Testament texts that link it to the Virgin Birth), the description of the Woman in pain and agony places Revelation 12 at odds with Isaiah 66:7-9 and the Virgin Birth.*

** If travailing in pain and torment rules out a Marian interpretation, it also rules out the Woman’s being Daughter Zion as well, because Isaiah 66:7-9 teaches that Daughter Zion gave birth without labor pain. The belief in the painless Virgin Birth is based largely upon Isaiah 66:7-9 text.*

** Since it is beyond doubt that Revelation 12:5 is referring to Isaiah 66:7-9 and Mary (see above), the painful birth in Revelation 12:5 must signify something other than the Virgin Birth. Scripture uses the words translated “travail” and “torment” literally and also metaphorically, to describe grief and interior suffering. For example, a righteous person may “travail” and be “tormented” by witnessing lawless acts such as murder (see 2 Peter*

2:7-8, Jeremiah 4:31, John 16:21-22).

** A possible solution to the Woman in travail may be that the text is not referring to the Virgin Birth as much as to Mary's second maternal event at the foot of the Cross. It is there that Christ's mother witnesses the execution of her Son by lawless men (Luke 2:35). Moreover, Revelation 12 contains many elements that suggest the crucifixion is in mind. For example, the Woman's birth is followed by Christ's ascension and enthronement much like the Crucifixion is followed by Christ's resurrection, ascension, and enthronement. If this were the Virgin Birth, the birth of the male child should be followed by the flight into Egypt, Christ's public ministry, the crucifixion, resurrection, and then His ascension and enthronement. Also, Jesus spoke of His crucifixion as the place where the "prince of this world" would be judged, the devil would be "cast out," and He would be "lifted up" (John 12:31-33). In Revelation 12:5 the male child is "caught up," the authority of the Son is established (Revelation 12:10) and the Devil and his angels are cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:9, 12). The Devil is overcome by "the blood of the lamb and because of the word of their testimony" (Revelation 12:11). All this, again, refers back to the crucifixion, not to the Virgin Birth.*

Chapter 11 In the End

Making sense of Jesus is a prerequisite for making sense of Mary. If someone considers John 3:16 an exhaustive summary of the person and work of Christ, Mary (and Marian doctrine) will not make very much sense. If anything, Marian doctrines will appear to be add-ons or even distractions from the gospel message. Christ in His fullness, however, is more than what is stated in John 3:16. Once that fullness is grasped, Mary begins to make sense and her importance in God's plan comes to light. Indeed, she shows us how much God loved the world that He would send His only-begotten Son to be "born of a woman...so that we may receive adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). For this reason, God has done great things for Mary (Luke 1:49).

The purpose of Making Sense of Mary is to provide Catholics and non-Catholics with a biblical framework in which to better understand the overall rationale for Marian doctrine as taught in Catholicism. It is not an apologetic work per se: its goal is not to argue and defend various points of doctrine, but to explain how Marian doctrine is ultimately the result of a full and robust understanding of Christ and His work in redemption.

Christ is at the center of all Marian teaching. Starting in Genesis with God's relationship to His creation, the Fall of Adam, God's perfect plan of redemption, the promise of the Davidic Messiah King, the "trigger sign" of the restoration of the Kingdom, and ending with the epic battle of the Woman and Her Seed against the Dragon, we endeavored to better understand Christ and His work of redemption. As each piece of this picture came together so did our understanding of Mary and the role God called her to play. During the assembly of this picture, various Marian doctrines appeared, scattered throughout these biblical themes.

In this chapter, we are going to reassemble all the Marian doctrines that are scattered throughout the various themes in this book into a short doctrinal summary. The summary is not meant to be exhaustive, but to provide the reader with a short explanation of each doctrine, its place in Catholic theology, and the different themes that support it. [\[282\]](#) By doing this, the chapter will serve as a short doctrinal roadmap in which the reader can locate where each Marian doctrine fits into the big picture.

Listed below is a selection of Marian teachings. The reader should note that not all teachings and doctrines are equal in Roman Catholic theology. Some teachings are well-defined while the exact boundaries of others are not so clear. Some teachings are solemnly proposed as Articles of the Faith. Others make up the common belief of the Church or they represent a consensus held by most Catholic theologians. To help aid the reader who may be unfamiliar with Catholic theology, a footnote is provided after each title to indicate the status of each particular belief.

Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Co-Reparatrix [\[283\]](#)

The belief that Mary is a Co-Redemptrix and Co-Reparatrix is based on the belief that Christ is the Redeemer and Repairer. As explained in chapters 2 and 3, Adam's sin alone caused the fall of humanity. He is the Sinner (Latin, Peccator). "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). Christ's obedience alone, namely His passion and death, resurrection, and enthronement in heaven, brought about our salvation and redemption. [\[284\]](#) Christ alone is the Redeemer and Mediator.

Although Adam's sin alone brought about the Fall of humanity, Eve also played a role. Her sinful actions provided the circumstances in which Adam sinned, and through childbirth she helped propagate this fallen nature to her children. If Adam is "the Sinner" (Peccator) then Eve is the "Co-Sinner" (Co-Peccatrix) since the Latin prefix "co-" means "with." Eve was with Adam in the Fall, not as an equal but as an ally in his rebellion.

Mary, like Eve, provided the necessary circumstances for our redemption. She is the vessel in which Christ's Incarnation took place, making Christ's sacrifice on the Cross possible. Just as Eve became the Devil's instrument in the Fall, God has made Mary His instrument by bringing about the circumstances needed for our Redemption. Christ is the Redeemer and Mary is the Co-Redemptrix because she is with the Redeemer in His saving work, not as an equal but as an ally. [\[285\]](#)

Eve is the Co-Sinner (Latin, Co-Peccatrix) because through childbirth she propagated this fallen nature to her children. Mary, in a mysterious way, is associated with the propagation of grace through childbirth as well. Not by giving birth to Christians, but by giving birth to Christ, who is both the Head and the Body.

Chapter 3 explored God's perfect plan of Redemption and how Christ, the New Adam, "wins back" and repairs what the Devil achieved in Adam. Christ is the Repairer. Since God's plan of redemption is perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing, God choose Mary to be the New Eve to "win back" and repair what the Devil achieved with Eve. Christ is the Repairer and Mary is the Co-Repairer (Latin, Co-Reparatrix).

The First Gospel and Revelation 12 both prophesied that the Woman (Mary) and Her Seed (Christ/Christians) are allies engaged in battle against the Devil and all who follow him. Christ ultimately conquers the Devil. God, by placing enmity between Mary and the Devil, makes her Christ's ally.

The Immaculate Conception [\[286\]](#)

No other Marian doctrine is as frequently misunderstood as the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Countless times commentators and celebrities on television and radio will make the rather silly offhanded remark, "Of course he fathered the child, unless this is a case of another Immaculate Conception!" What they are referring to is not the Immaculate

Conception, but the Virgin Birth (Mary's virginal conception and birth of Christ). The Immaculate Conception is entirely different in that it pertains to the conception of Mary, not Jesus, and it has nothing to do with Mary's parents, but the spiritual condition of Mary at her conception.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception teaches that by a singular act and privilege of God, Mary was from the first instant of her conception preserved by His favor in an unfallen state (that is "preserved free from all stain of Original Sin"). [\[287\]](#)

There are a number of themes that point to this teaching. For example, God's perfect plan of redemption, outlined in chapter 3, provides the rationale for God to perform this singular act.

God created Eve undefiled and without sin from the side of Adam. Since sin did not cloud this immaculate virgin's intellect or weaken her will, the Devil achieved a great victory in persuading Eve to join his rebellion against God. Since God's plan of redemption is perfect, complete, and lacks nothing, God despoils the Devil of all of his victories, He wins them back and restores all that was lost in the Fall. But how did God win back this demonic triumph over the immaculate virgin? God intervenes within the normal course of events to create another immaculate virgin, a New Eve, who, like Eve, was sinless and undefiled. Only this New Eve will, by God's grace, remain faithful to Him and become His instrument in His plan of Redemption.

If God had not raised up Mary as the Immaculate Virgin, several unacceptable consequences would have followed. The Devil would have achieved a feat in the Fall that still remained, even after Christ's redemption. That would have meant that the Devil still had something that he could boast of against God. It would also have implied that Christ's work of redemption, although super-sufficient, was, in a sense, incomplete because it failed to despoil the Devil of all the weapons that he had used to win dominion over man. [\[288\]](#) *To borrow our Lord's words in Luke 11:22, it would have meant that Christ had overcome the strong man (the Devil), yet had failed to take away all of the armor upon which he had relied. It would also have meant that the Devil, to use the words of Augustine, had been "insufficiently punished" since God had allowed the fall of the immaculate virgin, Eve to stand.*

The First Gospel (Genesis 3:15) says something about this doctrine as well. The structure of Genesis 3:15 (both in Hebrew and Greek) shows that God placed one and the same enmity between Christ and the Serpent's Seed and between the Woman and the Serpent (Devil) (Relationship #2). Since the same warfare or enmity exists between both pairs, it must be coextensive with each. We know that Christ's enmity with the Devil existed at the first instant of His earthly existence. It follows that Mary's enmity must have existed at the first instant of her life as well (i.e., at conception).

At the Annunciation, the Angel Gabriel found Mary, just as the ancient Serpent had found

Eve, already in God's grace or favor (Luke 1:28, 30). He calls her "full of grace" or "favored one" (Greek, kecharitomene). This word is a perfect passive participle denoting that God had graced or favored Mary sometime before the Angel arrived and that she already stood in that favor or grace. [289] Although this does not prove the Immaculate Conception, it does fit well with it.

Unbroken Faithfulness[\[290\]](#)

According to God's perfect plan of redemption, through His perfect obedience Christ "won back" all that Adam had lost through his disobedience. Christ remained faithful, never yielding to temptation or sin from the first moment of His earthly life onward. God also "won back" all that Eve had lost through her unfaithfulness in becoming the Devil's instrument in his rebellion. By God's grace and design, Mary remained faithful to God and became His instrument in His plan of redemption. [291]

The First Gospel prophesied that God would place enmity between the Woman and Her Seed and the Serpent and his seed (Relationship #1) making the Woman and Her Seed allies against the Devil. Since it was God who placed this enmity and made this alliance, the alliance was permanent and its enmity with the Devil was perfect.

Revelation 12, like the First Gospel, affirms that Christ and His mother are allied in war against the Dragon (Devil). God protects the male-child from the Dragon's jaws at birth and carries Him up to His throne (Revelation 12:4-5). He also protects the Woman, who never ceases to be at enmity with the Dragon (Devil) (Revelation 12:6, 14-15). Unable to conquer the Woman, the Devil is enraged and makes war with the rest of the Woman's Seed, the Church (Revelation 12:17). Like the First Gospel, God's actions ensure that the Woman and her male-child remain unconquered and unconquerable.

The Assumption of Mary[\[292\]](#)

In God's perfect plan of redemption, all the Devil's victories are taken away and redeemed on a new, higher level. Adam's disobedience leads to his expulsion from Paradise and the Tree of Life. In exile, Adam's once-glorious, sinless body eventually dies and becomes corrupt, returning to the ground from which it was formed (Genesis 3:19, 5:5). Christ, the New Adam, wins back this demonic victory through His obedience on the Cross and His resurrection. He ascends in His glorified body into the true Paradise of heaven, where the Tree of Life resides (Luke 23:43, 2 Corinthians 12:4, Revelation 2:7, 22:1-2).

Although God had formally exiled only Adam, Eve did not remain in paradise but was taken into exile with him (Genesis 3:22-24, 4:1). How does God despoil or win back the demonic victory of Eve's exile from paradise? Christ, the New Adam, brings Mary, the New Eve, into Paradise with Him. Otherwise, God would have won back only Adam's exile and corruption, while Eve's shameful desecration and corruption would have remained unanswered.

Christ's Kingship also supports Mary's Assumption into heaven. Christ is the Davidic King and son of David (Matthew 1:1, Luke 1:32, and others), and as a Davidic King, His mother is a Queen Mother. As explained in chapter 6, the Queen Mother served a special purpose for the King. She was a member of the King's royal court (having a throne next to the King) and she was a tangible sign of the King's royal lineage. Since dynastic succession came to the King through the Queen Mother, both shared the same fate (1 Kings 1:21). For example, when the successor of David was enthroned, the Queen Mother was enthroned as well (1 Kings 2:19). If the King was deposed and lost his Kingdom, the Queen Mother was also deposed and shared the same fate (Jeremiah 13:18, 29:2). [293]

Christ is enthroned not on earth, but in heaven, and it is there that His royal court resides (Luke 22:30, Hebrews 8:1, 12:1-2, Revelation 1:13, 4:2-4, et al.). Would not Mary, the Queen Mother of the true Son of David, share a similar privilege, namely, that of being received into the heavenly royal court as well? [294] If the Apostles are given twelve thrones in heaven to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30) and the righteous are raised up with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6-7), how can this honor be denied the Queen Mother of the Messiah King, especially since the office of the Queen Mother is a real, tangible manifestation of the King's glory as a sign of His right to the Davidic throne? [295]

The last chapter demonstrated that the Woman of Revelation 12 is Mary. Therefore, since Revelation 12:1 describes this Woman as bodily present in heaven, we have an explicit reference to the Assumption of Mary.

As a side note, Scripture indicates that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven, but it does not say whether this happened before or after Mary's death. Catholics and Orthodox both affirm Mary's bodily assumption into heaven although there is some disagreement as to when this occurred. Catholics commemorate Mary's entrance into heaven with the Feast of the Assumption, while the Orthodox commemorate it with the Feast of the Dormition or "Falling Asleep of Mary" (Greek, Koimisis). It is a common belief in the East that Mary died before she was assumed. The West is divided on this issue, although a majority of theologians tend to say that she died. The definition of the Assumption is worded in such a way as to permit either view. [296]

Mother of God [297]

One doctrine not directly addressed in this book is that Mary is the Mother of God or "God-bearer" (Greek, Theotokos, Latin Deipara). Marian doctrines, a clear understanding of Christ's titles will provide a clearer understanding of Mary's. This is especially true for the title Mother of God.

Before addressing the meaning of the title Mother of God, it is necessary first to sharpen our language by asking two questions about Christ: "Who is Jesus?" and "What is Jesus?" The first question concerns the person of Christ and the second concerns His nature.

Whenever someone asks who a person is, he wants to know his identity. For example, if someone asks, "Who is sitting in that chair?" He wants to know the name of the person sitting in the chair. The answer "John is sitting in the chair" is fitting, because John is the person who is sitting.

It is a very different thing to ask, "What is sitting in that chair?" This question inquires as to the nature of the one sitting. The correct answer would not be "John is sitting in the chair" (since that refers to the person), but the answer is "A human being is sitting in that chair" because what John is, his nature, is human. Therefore, who someone is refers to the person and what refers to his nature.

What is so important about making this distinction? This distinction is important because it is the person, not the nature, who acts. For example, if I pick up a pencil, who picks it up? It is I, Gary, who pick up the pencil. The action is mine. I did it. The reason I am able to perform this action is because of what I am, my nature. My human nature provides me with the capability to pick up the pencil.

These points may not seem important at first, but they have very important ramifications in regards to Christ and His saving work. For example, Who saved us? Did God save us? Did a human person save us? Or did two people save us, God and a human person? How one answers this question drastically affects how one understands Christ (Christology) and salvation (soteriology).

What is the correct answer to "Who saved us?" Christ saved us. "Who is Jesus Christ?" He is the Word (John 1:1, 14), the Father's only-begotten Son (2 Peter 1:17) and the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, the answer to "Who saved us?" is "God saved us." God is the one who acted on our behalf.

"What is Jesus Christ?" or "What is Jesus Christ's nature?" Jesus has two natures. He is fully divine and fully human, true God and true man.

When someone asks, "Who did the Virgin give birth to?" The questioner wishes to know the identity of the person born. The answer is, God. The Word (who "was with God" and "was God") was made flesh and born of the Virgin Mary. Put more succinctly, "Mary is the Mother of God." Notice how this statement is very different from, "What was born of Mary?" Asking "What is the Child?" concerns the nature of the Child who was born. In Christ's case, the Child is true God and true man. [\[298\]](#)

Why bring Mary into this at all? Why not just focus on the person and nature of Christ? The title Mother of God, like no other title, zeroes in on the question of who Jesus is because women do not give birth to abstractions (i.e., natures), they give birth to persons. Mother of God signifies that the person that Mary bore is God. She is, to use the Greek term, Theotokos, the "God-bearer."

The title Mother of God prevents the misunderstanding that Mary is somehow the

“originator” of God, since parents do not procreate the person of their child, they only contribute to their child’s nature. Think of it this way. A couple has a baby named Catherine. Relatives who see her say things like, “She has her mother’s eyes” or “She has her father’s stubbornness.” Catherine has these traits because her parents contributed to her genetic makeup, her nature. Even though Catherine shares some of the same traits as her parents, she is not her parents. She is Catherine, a separate, unique person. Her parents did not procreate who she is, they only contributed to what she is. The same is true with Mary. Mary cannot be the originator of God because no parent creates his child’s personhood and a little bit of thought also reveals that Mary could not be the originator of Christ’s divine nature either, because no one can give what he does not have. Mary could only have contributed to Christ’s human nature. Therefore, she is the Mother of God, the God-bearer.

Mother of God in Scripture

This is not the place to give a full-scale defense of Mary as Mother of God. Such a defense would go beyond the scope of this work such a title is not a point of contention for most Protestants anyway. Instead, the following is a brief summary of the various themes already covered in this book that touch on this doctrine.

One biblical theme is found among the “trigger sign” passages of the restoration of the Kingdom, Isaiah 7:14, which reads:

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

Who is Immanuel? Matthew 1:23 tells us that Immanuel means “God with us.” Therefore, who did the Virgin conceive and give birth to? She gave birth to Immanuel - God with us. In Christian revelation, we know that God is with us in the person of Jesus. Therefore, the Virgin Mary is the Mother of God.

The definition of Mother of God given at the Council of Ephesus (AD 431) affirms this interpretation:

"If any one does not profess that Emmanuel is truly God, and that consequently the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God—inasmuch as she gave birth in the flesh to the Word of God made flesh, according to what is written: ‘The Word was made flesh’—let him be anathema."

Isaiah 9:6, likewise, affirms that the promised child will be God Himself:

"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."

Who is the child born to us? He is “Mighty God.” Who is Mary? Mary is the Mother of

[Mighty] God.

Likewise, Zephaniah 3:17, one of our Daughter Zion passages, affirms Mary as Mother of God in that it prophesied that God would come to Daughter Zion:

"The LORD [Yahweh], your God, is in your midst [or your womb], a victorious savior [a warrior who saves]."

Who will come into Daughter Zion's "midst" or "womb"? "Yahweh, your God - a warrior who saves" will come. In Luke 1:31-32, the angel Gabriel says to Mary: 'And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus [i.e., Yahweh-saves]. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High...'

Who was conceived in Mary's womb? Jesus [Yeshua], "Yahweh-Savior." Who is Mary? She is the mother of God.

In another Daughter Zion passage, Zechariah wrote:

"Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell [literally, tabernacle] in your midst', declares the Lord" (Zechariah 2:10 [14]).

Who will "tabernacle" within Daughter Zion? God will tabernacle. Likewise, John 1:14 said that the "Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us." Where did the Word become flesh and tabernacle? He became flesh in Mary's womb. Whose mother is she? Mary is the mother of God. Both Daughter Zion passages, which were fulfilled in Mary, point to Mary being the Mother of God. [\[299\]](#)

The early Christian writers recognized this very important Christological fact. For example, a disciple of John the Apostle, Ignatius of Antioch, writing around AD 110, said:

"For our God, Jesus Christ, was, according to the appointment of God, conceived in the womb by Mary." [\[300\]](#)

Who is conceived in Mary's womb? God is conceived in Mary's womb. Who is Mary? Mary is the Mother of God.

Too Easily Misunderstood?

Some Christians believe Mary is the Mother of God, but they refuse to use this title out of fear that it could be misunderstood; namely, that someone may wrongly understand the title to mean that Mary is the originator of God. However, the same line of reasoning would also prevent Christians from sharing the Scriptures with others because it also could be misunderstood and distorted (2 Peter 3:16). If the inspired word of God can be misunderstood and distorted, so can everything else. Misunderstandings are unavoidable. The solution should not be to hide what is true, but to teach the truth clearly so as to avoid misunderstanding. If someone misunderstands, we correct them. It is as simple as that.

Mother of All Christians[\[301\]](#)

That Mary is the mother of all Christians is found in numerous places throughout our investigation. It was a great victory of the Serpent to turn the fruitfulness of Adam and Eve into their filling the world with fallen children. Eve is somewhat ironically called “the mother of the living” (Genesis 3:20) after the Fall. God removes this victory of the Serpent through His creation of the New Eve who truly becomes the mother of the living by giving birth to Christ, Who is both Head and Body. Genesis 3:15 (according to Romans 16:20) identifies the Woman as the mother of “Her Seed,” which is Christ, both Head and Body. Daughter Zion, likewise, gives birth to one individual (Christ), and a nation (the Church). Finally, Revelation 12:7 identifies all Christians, namely, those “who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus,” as “Her Seed.” The Woman, as we have seen, refers primarily to the Virgin Mary, the mother of the male-child (Revelation 12:5).

Intercession[\[302\]](#)

Catholics believe that the saints in heaven pray for us. Among these saints Mary is an especially powerful “prayer warrior,” to use a term common among Christians. There are several themes that lend themselves to this belief.

Chapter 6 explained how the Queen Mother played a special role as an intercessor to the King. She sat on a throne next to the King (1 Kings 2:19) and she presented petitions to the King for his consideration. Since Jesus is the Son of David enthroned in heaven (Revelation 12:5) and Mary is with Him, crowned, as a Queen Mother (Revelation 12:1), she exercises that office as an intercessor. Indeed, it would be quite odd if, contrary to her office, Mary did not present petitions to Christ the King, while other members of the King’s royal court in heaven did (Revelation 5:8, 8:3-4).[\[303\]](#)

Mary’s intercession is also implied by the story of the wedding at Cana. Mary intercedes on behalf of the wedding guests, saying “They have no wine” (John 2:3). Jesus responds that His hour of His passion and death has not yet come (John 2:4). Christ’s crucifixion is the Bridegroom’s wedding feast. Christ’s response to Mary suggest that at that hour, the wedding feast of the Cross, the mother of the Bridegroom (Mary) may present the needs of those invited to His wedding.

Christ’s unique association with the Church as His Body also sheds light on Mary’s role as intercessor. Because Mary’s Child, Christ, is both the Head and the Body, Mary’s maternal care for Christ extends in a special way to the Church:

"This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect."[\[304\]](#)

As Origen pointed out, when Jesus said from the Cross, “Woman, behold your son” (John

19:26), he was telling Mary to see Himself in His beloved disciple and also the beloved disciple to see Mary as his mother. By doing this, Christ's words extend Mary's maternal love for Him to include His Body, the Church, as well. Mary expresses this special maternal love through prayer to her Son.

Revelation 12 also points to the maternal love that exists between the Woman (Mary) and all Christians. Revelation extends Mary's "travailing" at the foot of the Cross, her deepest and most profound love for her Son, to all who are members of His Body, who are also "Her Seed" (Genesis 3:15, Romans 16:20, John 19:26-27, Revelation 12:17). Mary's love for Christ (Head and Body) did not cease after she completed her earthly life, but just as heaven does not extinguish the love of the saints but increases it and perfects it, Mary's love for Christ (Head and Body) continues even now in glory:

"Leaving aside charity towards God, who can contemplate the Immaculate Virgin without feeling moved to fulfill that precept which Christ called peculiarly His own, namely that of loving one another as He loved us? 'A great sign,' thus the Apostle St. John describes a vision divinely sent him, appears in the heavens: 'A woman clothed with the sun, and with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars upon her head' (Apoc. xii., 1). Everyone knows that this woman signified the Virgin Mary, the stainless one who brought forth our Head. The Apostle continues: 'And, being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered' (Apoc. xii., 2). John therefore saw the Most Holy Mother of God already in eternal happiness, yet travailing in a mysterious childbirth. What birth was it? Surely it was the birth of us who, still in exile, are yet to be generated to the perfect charity of God, and to eternal happiness. And the birth pains show the love and desire with which the Virgin from heaven above watches over us, and strives with unwearying prayer to bring about the fulfillment of the number of the elect." [\[305\]](#)

Reflection in Marian Devotion

One prominent theme in the Catholic Church's Marian devotions, hymns, artwork, and doctrine is that Mary is the mother of all Christians:

"She is 'the mother of the members of Christ . . . having cooperated by charity that faithful might be born in the Church, who are members of that Head.' Wherefore she is hailed as a preeminent and singular member of the Church, and as its type and excellent exemplar in faith and charity. The Catholic Church, taught by the Holy Spirit, honors her with filial affection and piety as a most beloved mother." [\[306\]](#)

The love Catholics have for Mary is described above as "filial affection" - the affection of a son for his mother. This childlike affection for Mary sometimes strikes non-Catholic Christians as rather odd, like some form of overheated piety quite detached from Christ. The contrary is true. [\[307\]](#) It is rooted in Christ and our relationship to Him. If you view Christ as your Savior who died two thousand years ago and someone with whom you have a personal relationship, this aspect of Marian devotion may not make much sense.

If, however, you also view your relationship with Christ as that of a Bride to her Bridegroom and as your being a member of His Body, then this filial love for Mary will make perfect sense.

One of the earliest extant Marian hymns is the Sub Tuum Praesidium (Beneath Thy Protection), which is very ancient. The version below comes from around AD 250:

"Beneath your compassion,

We take refuge, O Mother of God:

do not despise our petitions in time of trouble:

but rescue us from dangers,

only pure, only blessed one." [\[308\]](#)

The Sub Tuum given above, and versions like it, are found in the 3rd century Coptic (Egyptian) Christmas Liturgy as well as in the Byzantine, Ambrosian, and Roman liturgies. It expresses both the filial love for Mary as mother of Christ, the Head and Body, and it asks Mary to pray for them to Jesus.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

This filial love for Mary helps to make sense of other Marian devotions. For example, the Western Church honors Mary in iconography and devotion as Our Lady of Perpetual Help, also known in Eastern Orthodoxy as the Virgin of the Passion. The icon depicts Mary comforting Jesus while two angels, Michael and Gabriel, present Christ with the instruments of His passion (the lance, the sponge, and the Cross). Terrified, the Christ Child flees to Mary's lap for comfort.

The icon and devotion help Christians prayerfully meditate on the incredible love of Christ for us in His passion and death, as well as the consolation offered by His mother at the foot of the Cross. It also reminds us that no servant is greater than his master (John 15:20) and we are all called to pick up our cross and suffer with Him so that we may be glorified with Him (Luke 14:27, Romans 8:17).

At times, living out the gospel can be terrifying, so, in this devotion, we look to Mary through the eyes of Christ and see His mother steadfastly standing at the foot of the Cross. Knowing that we are members of His Body and Her Seed (Revelation 12:17), we are comforted to know that she will also steadfastly stand by us in our trials as we carry our cross. Through this devotion (and outlook) Catholics fulfill Paul's statement, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ in me" (Galatians 2:20) and Christ's words to His beloved disciple, "Behold, your mother" (John 19:27) become a lived experience.

Why Do Saints in Heaven Pray for Us?

Some deny Mary's intercession because to them the idea that the saints in heaven pray for us doesn't make much sense. They say, why would the saints in heaven do anything other than praise and worship God?

We know that the angels and saints in heaven do offer "the prayers of the saints" to God because Scripture says so (Revelation 5:8, 8:3-4), but what possible rationale could there be for the "spirits of the just made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23) to intercede for us to God?

Members of the Body

Christians ought to remember that we are members of Christ's Body bound together by mutual love (John 13:34-35, Romans 12:10, 13:8, Galatians 5:13, Ephesians 4:2,16, 1 Thessalonians 4:9 et al.) and that God has composed the Body so that all its members "may have the same care for one another" (1 Corinthians 12:25-27). Death does not terminate the love that unites all Christians in Christ (Romans 8:38-39). Christians remain "in Him" as members of Christ's Body even after death (Ephesians 2:5-7). [\[309\]](#) Being perfectly sanctified in heaven, their love and concern for the other members of Christ's Body do not cease, but are perfected. [\[310\]](#) It follows that these glorified members of Christ's Body would indeed express their love and concern for us through their prayers and petitions to God.

Imitators of Christ

Another way to make sense of the prayers of the saints in heaven is found in the doctrine of sanctification or holiness.

All Christians believe that they undergo a process of sanctification (their being made holy) here on earth, and at the heart of all sanctification is the imitation of Christ. [\[311\]](#)

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body (2 Corinthians 4:7-10).

United to Christ, the Christian becomes more and more like Christ, so that Paul can say to the Christians in Corinth, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1), and again elsewhere:

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks (Ephesians 5:1-4).

This process of sanctification, which some call actual or progressive sanctification,

continues throughout one's life. However, in heaven all the saints will be perfectly and completely sanctified. [\[312\]](#) Scripture is quite clear on this point. Revelation 21:27 teaches that "...nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it [the heavenly Jerusalem]...". "Unclean" in this context refers to the spiritual defilement of sin (Matthew 15:18-20). Heaven is the assembly of the Firstborn where the spirits of the righteous made perfect reside (Hebrews 12:23). All the saints in heaven are perfectly holy. [\[313\]](#)

If the imitation of Christ is at the heart of sanctification, how do the saints in heaven, who are completely sanctified, image Christ? On earth they became imitators of God by living in love as Christ loved us, through self-sacrifice and self-denial (Ephesians 5:1-4, Philippians 3:8-11, 2 Corinthians 1:5, and 1 Peter 2:20-21, 4:1). As Jesus taught, "... 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me'" (Matthew 16:24) and "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master..." (Matthew 10:24-25). By God's grace, they "put to death the sinful deeds of the body" (Romans 8:13) by self-denial and self-sacrificing love and grow in holiness.

The saints, however, cannot image Christ in this way because there is no suffering in heaven:

"They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:16-17).

"...and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). [\[314\]](#)

How, then, do the saints imitate Christ in heaven? The solution is that the saints on earth become imitators of Christ as He was on earth (i.e., selfless love, self-sacrifice, etc.) and the saints in heaven must, therefore, imitate Christ as He is in heaven. But what is Christ doing in heaven that they may imitate?

Christ isn't suffering or dying in heaven (Romans 6:9-10); rather, He is interceding for us before His father:

"Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). [\[315\]](#)

"...Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:34). [\[316\]](#)

If those who are perfectly sanctified most perfectly imitate Christ, and Christ is

interceding for us before His Father in heaven, it follows that the saints in heaven must be imitating Christ by interceding for us as well.

Heavenly intercession, therefore, is the completion and fruition of our sanctification. It is the fulfillment of the command to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 5:43-44).

[\[317\]](#)

Effective Prayer and Sanctification

Catholics and other Christians agree that effective prayer is tied to one's sanctification. Christians don't seek out public sinners to pray for them to God, they seek out the most holy members of their communities. This belief is very biblical. Psalms 66:18 says, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear...". Isaiah 59:2 also says, "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." Psalms 24:3-6, says, "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy Place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face, O God of Jacob." In the New Testament we also find, "For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears attend to their prayers..." (1 Peter 3:12) and "...the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16).

If our prayers, which are given by those who are constantly growing in sanctification or holiness, are effective before God, how much more effective are the prayers of those who have become perfectly sanctified in heaven? In other words, if the prayers of a righteous man here on earth can accomplish much, certainly the prayers of the "spirits of the just made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23) in heaven are even more effective.

Those who are closest to God have His ear. All the saints in heaven, being perfectly sanctified, are powerful "prayer warriors" on our behalf, especially Mary, who, through God's grace and design, is filled with grace and most closely imitates Christ.

That being said, we must also keep in mind that their intercession differs from that of Christ. He alone is our High Priest and minister in the Holy of Holies in heaven (Hebrews 2:17, 3:1, 4:14-16, 8:1-2, etc.). His intercession is unique and it is only through Christ that all intercession (on earth and in heaven) is effective (John 15:5-7, 1 Timothy 2:1-5). Therefore, all intercessions and petitions are dependent on Him and made effective by Him.[\[318\]](#)

Conclusion

It is my hope that this chapter has provided you, the reader, with a basic understanding of how various teachings on Mary can fit into the larger biblical rationale outlined in this book. Mary and Marian teaching are not add-ons to the drama of salvation history, they

are part of it. A clear understanding of Christ makes possible a clear understanding of Mary's role in God's plan. There is no competition between Jesus and His mother. Quite the opposite. Marian doctrine, when properly understood, does not detract from Christ, rather it brings His saving work into focus and shows us the expansiveness of God's work of Redemption. Authentic Marian devotion, likewise, does not distract us from Christ, rather it brings us closer to Him. It is my deepest hope that this book has increased your love and devotion to Our Lord and that through that it has also helped you to make sense of what Catholics believe about the Virgin Mary.

In Summary

** All of the main Catholic Marian teachings and dogmas, with the exception of the perpetual virginity of Mary (see Appendix 2), find support within the prophetic layers examined in this book.*

** Mary's being the Co-Redemptrix and Co-Reparatrix can be understood in the context of God's perfect plan of Redemption in which He despoils the Devil of all that he achieved in the Fall. Adam and Eve were allied together in rebellion against God. Jesus and Mary are allied together in God's perfect plan of redemption, so as to repair what was lost. The First Gospel, moreover, prophesied that God would place enmity so that the Messiah and His Mother would be together at war against the Devil.*

** The Immaculate Conception teaches that Mary from the first moment of her conception was free from the stain of Adam's sin (Original Sin). God's perfect plan of redemption wins back the fall of the immaculate virgin Eve by the immaculate Virgin Mary. The First Gospel teaches that the same enmity exists between the Woman and Her Seed and the Devil, as seen by the strict parallelism of Genesis 3:15. It follows, therefore, that since Christ from the first moment of His earthly existence is righteous (i.e., at enmity with the Devil), the same is true for Mary as well.*

** The Assumption (the Dormition) teaches that at the end of her earthly life Mary was taken body and soul into heaven. God's perfect plan of redemption, the First Gospel, Queen Mother, and Revelation 12 all provide the context in support of this belief.*

** The doctrine that Mary is the Mother of God teaches that the person Mary conceived and bore is God, the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity. The doctrine can be found Isaiah 7:14 and in the Daughter Zion passages of Zephaniah 3:17 and Zechariah 2:10 [14].*

** The belief in Mary's intercession in heaven is based on her maternal care for Christ, both the Head and the Body. She is the mother of Christ (Revelation 12:5) also of all Christians (Revelation 12:17). The role of intercession to the King was also an important aspect of the office of Queen Mother. Her place in the royal court and relationship to the King allowed her to present the petitions of the subjects to the King for His consideration.*

Appendix 1 Answering Common Objections

Luke 11:27-28 - Jesus Dismisses His Mother's Blessedness?

Luke 11:27-28 (Matthew 12:46-50, Also Mark 3:31-35 and Luke 8:19-21).

While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed.' But He said, 'On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it' (Luke 11:27-28).

Objection: *Mary's physical relationship to Christ did not give her any special privileges in God's eyes. Christ rejected this idea and taught that the real people who are blessed are those who "hear the word of God and observe it."*

Answer: *Jesus did not deny that His mother is blessed because that would contradict the Scripture where Mary says, "For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed" (Luke 1:48). Jesus' response cannot contradict Luke 1:48, but does Jesus' blessing contradict the woman's blessing for His mother? Compare the two blessings:*

The Woman: "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed."

Jesus: "...blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

Are they contradictory or is it possible for both to be true? Obviously, they are not contradictory statements. Mary can hear the word of God and observe it just like us. Indeed, Mary is blessed both because she gave birth to Christ and because she heard the word of God and kept it in her heart.

*What confuses people is the translation "on the contrary" for the Greek word *menoun*, as, for example, in the New American Standard Bible (1995) quoted above. The idea conveyed is that Jesus is rejecting the woman's blessing and proposing something to the contrary. As we have seen, that's simply not the case.*

*As for the translation, the Greek word *menoun* is a strengthened form of "therefore" (Greek, *oun*) and so it can mean "on the contrary" (as in Romans 9:20), but it can also mean "even more" or "yes, rather." [\[319\]](#) The standard work, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Luke* explains that in Luke 11:28, the word *menoun*, "...does not question the truth of the preceding statement, but emphasizes the greater relevance of what follows." The handbook goes on to suggest the following translations, "Blessed rather are, or, 'yes, but happier are', 'be that as it may, very much blessed are' (Shona 1966), 'that may be true, but those that are called (i.e. really are) blessed are' (Balinese)." [\[320\]](#)*

The translation "on the contrary" wrongly pits two potentially complimentary blessings against each other. It is as if Jesus was saying, "No, my mother is not blessed. Only those

who follow the word of God are blessed.” The handbook, quoted above, says that this is not true. Jesus affirms that Mary is blessed for being His mother, but He points out greater reason for being blessed, hearing the word of God and obeying it. Mary certainly is blessed in this second sense as well (Luke 1:38).

Indeed, Jesus is saying something not very different than what Elizabeth said to Mary at the Visitation. Filled with the spirit, Elizabeth pronounces two blessings upon Mary in Luke 1:41-45. The first blessing is upon Mary as the mother of the Messiah, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (Luke 1:42). This blessing is essentially what the woman in the crowd said, but Elizabeth doesn’t stop there. She also blesses Mary’s fidelity to God’s word, “And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord” (Luke 1:45). This second blessing is not much different than what Jesus said about hearing God’s word and obeying it.

Of these two blessings, Mary is most blessed because she heard the word of God and obeyed it. Here is why:

"First, there is the matter of priority. If Mary had not heard the word of God and obeyed it, she would not have received the blessing of becoming the mother of Our Lord. In other words, blessed obedience makes possible Mary’s blessed maternity, not the other way around."

Second, Mary’s faith and fidelity repair Eve’s faithlessness and disobedience and they also bring about the fulfillment of a number of prophetic themes in Scripture. Mary becomes the Virgin who will conceive, the sign of the Kingdom’s restoration, she becomes the Queen Mother of the Messiah King, and she becomes the mother of the Christ, Who is both the Head and the Body.

Third, Jesus’ blessing in Luke 11:28 is fulfilled in Mary, but it is not restricted to Mary. Mary’s faith is an exemplar for the Church, as Our Lord says elsewhere:

"While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. Someone said to Him, ‘Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.’ But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, ‘Who is My mother and who are My brothers?’ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, ‘Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother’" (Matthew 12:46-50, also Mark 3:31-35 and Luke 8:19-21).

Jesus is not disavowing His kin, but showing that physical and spiritual kinship mirror each other. By doing the will of the Father, Mary became Christ’s mother. By doing the will of God, Christ’s disciples metaphorically become Christ’s “brother and sister and mother.”

Romans 3:23 – “All Have Sinned”

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... (Romans 3:23)

Objection: Paul teaches that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Mary must be a sinner like us. Therefore, Mary’s Immaculate Conception is impossible.

Answer: Romans 3:23 is not Paul’s complete thought, but rather a summary or an explanation of what he said in verse 22:

“...even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:22-23). [\[321\]](#)

What is this “distinction” that Paul references? In the second chapter of Romans, Paul teaches that God makes no distinction between Jews and gentiles (non-Jews). Paul’s Jewish opponents believed that they could violate God’s moral law and escape His judgment (Romans 2:3) because they had the Law and circumcision (Romans 2:25-27). Paul asserts the contrary. God will judge everyone (Jew and Gentile) according to their deeds (Romans 2:10) for “...there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2:11). Being circumcised or uncircumcised means nothing. What matters is keeping the moral law (Romans 2:25-26, 1 Corinthians 7:19). Paul’s opponents taught that following the “works of the law,” which distinguished Jews from gentiles (such as circumcision, dietary regulations, etc.) guaranteed them God’s favor. Paul asserts that there is no such privileged class of people. God will judge all people according to their deeds, not whether they were circumcised or not.

When Paul says in Romans 3:23 “all have sinned,” he means no group of people (Jews or Gentiles), as a people, is guaranteed God’s favor. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Rather, God’s favor or grace is given to those who have faith in Christ, not merely those who are circumcised and follow the other ceremonial laws. Otherwise, God would be the God of the Jews only and not the God of the gentiles as well (Romans 3:28-30).

Since the context indicates that Paul is not speaking about all people as individuals, but as groups (circumcised Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles), the objector wrenched this text out of context by applying it to all individuals.

Paul does address the issue of our universal fallen condition in Romans Chapter 5, but not here. In this text, however, Paul’s main concern is to demonstrate that the Jewish “works of the law” do not create a privileged class of people and that the Jews and Gentiles are on equal footing before God.

“All have sinned”

The objector also assumes, incorrectly, that Paul is speaking about fallen humanity, specifically, Original Sin, “Adamic Sin,” or “our fallen nature,” but was Paul referring to

our fallen state or condition?

If Paul had wished to refer to the fallen condition that we inherited from Adam, he should have said, "...all are sinners" or "all are in a state of sin" or "all are fallen and estranged from God." All these statements refer to a condition or state, but Paul did not use these words. Instead, He uses a verb that denotes action, "All have sinned" that is "All have committed sin." [322] This verb denotes that he is not talking about a state, or status, or condition, such as Original Sin (or "Adamic-sin"), but sins that they have committed. [323]

Paul's point is that all peoples (Jews and Gentiles) have committed sins and have fallen short of the glory of God. The Jews have sinned just as the Gentiles have. The circumcised have sinned as well as the uncircumcised. In terms of peoples or groups, Paul's statement is true and does not permit any exceptions, but can our objector also apply this verse to all individuals? Is every single human being guilty of committing sin? In general, the answer is yes, but there are exceptions. For example, the mentally impaired and children who die before the age of reason do not culpably commit sins. They may have objectively committed sins, but subjectively they are not culpable for their actions.

One could counter this example by pointing out that Paul does not say, "all are guilty of sin," but that "all have sinned." Fair enough. What about unborn children? Do they sin within the womb? What about children who are still-born, or those who are aborted, or those who die in infancy? Did they commit sin? No. These are exceptions and unfortunately there have been literally hundreds of millions of these exceptions. What about Jesus? Is He included in Romans 3:23? It says "all have sinned." "Jesus never sinned." Someone may say, "Jesus is God, so He doesn't count. He is a special exception." That is precisely my point. Paul's statement that "all have sinned" is a general rule that allows for special exceptions. Some are physically incapable of sinning or being guilty of sin. Another exception is Christ because He is God made flesh.

If Romans 3:23 permits exceptions, then the next logical question is to ask whether there are biblical grounds for understanding Mary as a special exception as well? Given Mary's role in God's perfect plan of Redemption (Chapter 2-3) and God's promise in the First Gospel (Genesis 3:15) (Chapter 4), and that the mother of the Messiah received divine help so as not to be overcome by the Dragon / Devil (Chapter 9), there are good biblical grounds to believe that Mary is an exception as well.

John 2:4 – Jesus Rebukes Mary?

And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come' (John 2:4).

Objection: *When Mary told Jesus that the wedding feast ran out of wine, Jesus rebuked her saying, "...[W]hat does that have to do with us?" Jesus' repudiation of His mother shows that Mary had no special place in God's plan of redemption and that she even*

acted contrary to Christ's will.

Answer: *This objection was once very popular, but its popularity has waned in recent years, and for good reason. Jesus' words to Mary are literally, "What to me and to you, woman." (Greek, ti emoi kai soi, gunai). Notice that the phrase is not a complete sentence. Since Jesus' actual words do not make sense in English, translators are forced to supply what the original Greek lacks in hope of giving this phrase some meaning. The New American Standard Version (1995), quoted above, translates "what to you and to me, woman" as "what does that have to do with us?" Other standard translations give:*

"Woman, what does this have to do with me?" (English Standard Version)

"How does that concern us, woman?" (International Standard Version)

"Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (King James Version)

"Woman, why are you saying this to me? (New English Translation)

"Woman, how does your concern affect me?" (New American Bible)

"O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." (Revised Standard Version)

As you can see, the meaning of Christ's words differs widely from translation to translation. What do they mean?

"What to me and to you" is a Hebrew idiom. An idiom is a group of words or a phrase that has a pre-established meaning and usage. We have idioms in English. For example, someone may say, "I had a feeling." The idiomatic understanding has nothing to do with the sense of touch. It means that the person had a premonition about something. Jesus' phrase, "what to me and to you," is like that. It is a Hebrew idiom found both in the Old and New Testaments. For example, when Abraham bargains with Ephron over the price of a field and cave in Machpelah, Ephron said:

"My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? So bury your dead" (Genesis 23:15). [\[324\]](#)

Abraham agrees to pay Ephron's price for the property. The phrase, "What to me and to you?" means that Abraham's offer of four hundred shekels of silver for the property will be agreeable to both men.

The idiom can also be used when there is no agreement, as, for example, when Abishai asked permission to kill Shimei for cursing David. David replied:

"What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah?" (2 Samuel 16:10). [\[325\]](#)

David refused to have Abishai kill Shimei. The idiom "What to me and to you?" in this

passage means that Abishai's request to David is not a reason for a quarrel, but it will not be granted.

Judges 11:12 also uses the same idiom in an effort to avoid a conflict. When Ammon threatened Jephthah with war, Jephthah replied:

"What is between you and me, that you have come to me to fight against my land?" [\[326\]](#)

The idiom is used as a diplomatic effort to avoid a war with Ammon. It means "What quarrel is there between us? Why then have you come to fight?"

In the New Testament, the Gerasene demoniac in Mark 5:1-20 (Luke 8:26-39, Matthew 8:28-34) uses this idiom with Jesus. After encountering Jesus, the demoniac asks:

"What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" (Mark 5:7). [\[327\]](#)

This quote, like the others, is a paraphrase of "What to you and to me." Although the translation above makes it seem as if the demons are irritated with Jesus and ready to pick a fight, the idiomatic meaning is the opposite. The demons wish to avoid confrontation with Jesus because they knew that He could cast them into the abyss (Luke 8:31). Instead, they begged Him to send them away into a herd of swine (Mark 5:11-12, Matthew 8:31, Luke 8:32). The idiom, "What to me and to you?" means, "We do not wish to have a quarrel."

When Mary informs Jesus that "They have no wine" (John 2:3), Jesus did not respond with a rebuke, but rather that Mary's request causes no problem, only His Hour has not yet come.

This interpretation is confirmed by Mary's response. Did she turn away from Jesus in anger or shame? No, she turned to the servants and told them, "Whatever He says to you, do it" (John 2:5). Clearly, Mary anticipated from Jesus' words a favorable response and Jesus did respond favorably by performing His first public miracle (John 2:7-11).

Jeremiah 7:18, 44:17-19, 25 – The Queen of Heaven

The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods in order to spite Me (Jeremiah 7:18).

Objection: Scripture condemns worshipping the "Queen of Heaven." Since Catholics believe Mary is the "Queen of Heaven," they commit idolatry.

Answer: The only connection between the fertility cult of Astarte mentioned in Jeremiah and the Virgin Mary is the title "Queen of heaven." Yet, even this meager connection is disputable.

Astarte was thought to be a goddess by the pagans, and she was worshipped as such by burning incense to her, offering her cakes and sacrifices, among other things. Mary is only a creature. She is the "bondswoman of the Lord." Catholics never offer sacrifices or incense or any such thing to her. In fact, the Church has condemned this.[\[328\]](#) Worship is given to God alone. Therefore, this comparison is false.

We may also add that even the title "Queen of Heaven" in Jeremiah 7:18 is uncertain. Some manuscripts read, "the frame of heaven," which refers to the planets.[\[329\]](#) Regardless of its correct reading, the objection is as silly as it is dangerous. If similar titles somehow connect Mary with the Astarte cult, what would the objector say when it is pointed out that Jesus and the pagan gods Zeus and Enlil were each called "king of kings, lord of lords" (compare 1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14, 19:16)? What does this say about Christians who speak of Jesus as the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords?" Are they engaging in paganism? Absolutely not. Notice how this flimsy logic can be easily turned against other Christian beliefs. The objection's "guilt by similar titles" is so bad and illogical that it is dangerous.

Luke 1:46-47 – Mary Needed A Savior

"And Mary said: 'My soul exalts the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior'" (Luke 1:46-47).

Objection: *Mary called God her Savior. If God is Mary's Savior, she must have needed something to be saved from, namely sin. Therefore, Mary shared our common fallen nature (i.e., Original Sin).*

Answer: *God is Mary's Savior. The Immaculate Conception does not eliminate God from saving Mary. Quite the opposite, the Immaculate Conception is how God saves her. Had the ordinary course of events continued, Mary would have been a fallen child of Eve just like us, but God intervened. As Genesis 3:15 states, God placed enmity between the Woman and the Serpent. God's action represents a change in the status quo so that when God puts enmity between Mary and the Devil, He saves her from what would have otherwise transpired.*

We are all born estranged from God, and He intervenes after the fact to save us. In Mary's case, God intervenes at the first moment of her conception. In both cases, however, God intervenes. In both cases, God is the Savior. The question really is not whether God saved Mary, but really when did God save Mary. Catholics believe it took place at her conception. Non-Catholic Christians generally believe that it happened sometime afterwards, but both believe that God is Mary's savior. Mary's words simply affirm this.

Matthew 1:25 – Joseph did not know Mary until she gave birth...

"...but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus"

(Matthew 1:25).

Objection: Matthew says that Joseph did not have relations with Mary until (Greek *heōs hou*) she gave birth to Jesus. The words translated “until” signify that the situation changed. Therefore, Joseph must have had relations with Mary after Jesus’ birth, and the Catholic doctrine that Mary remained a virgin her whole life contradicts Scripture.

Answer: Today, the word “until” often implies that a situation has changed or that it will change after a certain point. If someone said, “I was hungry until I ate the sandwich,” one would conclude from that statement that after eating the sandwich, the person speaking ceased to be hungry. The ancient use of “until” (*heōs hou*) is less decisive. It doesn’t necessarily mean that a change has occurred or will occur after a point. Sometimes “until” is used simply to affirm that a certain condition existed up to a designated point without implying anything about what happened afterwards. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this point:

"...but you are to stay in the city until (*heōs hou*) you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

Jesus is speaking to the remaining eleven Apostles. [\[330\]](#) If we interpret “until” according to the objector’s understanding, then the Apostles would have understood Jesus’ command to mean that they were to stay in the city only until they were “clothed with power from on high,” then they were to leave. However, this is not what happened. We know that the Apostles did not leave Jerusalem after Pentecost, but left much later (Acts 8:1). Therefore, they must have understood Jesus’ “until” (*heōs hou*) to mean only that they were to stay in the city up to the time when they were clothed with power. It did not suggest that they had to leave afterwards.

Another example of where “until” does not imply that a change will take place is found in Acts 25:21.

"But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor’s decision, I ordered him to be kept in custody until (*heōs hou*) I send him to Caesar."

If “until” signaled a change, Paul should have been released from custody after he was sent to Caesar, but Paul remained in custody after he was sent. After all, this was part of Paul’s strategy. He appealed to Caesar because he knew that he would remain in protective custody and that the Jews would be unable to bring him to trial. The “until” in Acts 25:21, therefore, does not signal that a change will take place.

The Old Testament provides several examples as well. For example, 2 Samuel 6:23 LXX reads:

"As to Michal daughter of Saul, she had no child till (*heōs*) the day of her death." [\[331\]](#)

If “until” implied a change then Michal must have given birth to a child after she died!

Obviously, that is not the case. Michal died childless (and remained childless).

What these passages and others (such as Psalms 72:7, 94:13, et al.) show is that the ancient use of the word(s) translated “until” may or may not signal that a change will take place at a certain point. Many times the ancients used “until” simply to emphasize that a state of affairs existed before a given point. This seems to be what Matthew 1:25 is doing. The context of this passage shows that Matthew’s concern is to establish the fact of the Virgin Birth of Christ (as a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 LXX), and not to address the question of whether Mary had other children after Jesus. For more information on whether Mary had other children, see Appendix 2 - Making Sense of Mary Ever-Virgin.

Luke 2:22-24 – Mary’s sin offering

And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, ‘EVERY firstborn MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD’), and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, ‘A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS’ (Luke 2:22-24).

Objection: *The offering of two turtledoves or two young pigeons is a sin offering, “‘When the days of her purification are completed, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the doorway of the tent of meeting a one-year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering” (Leviticus 12:6). If Mary made a sin offering, she must have been a sinner.*

Answer: *Does a woman sin when she gives birth? Does she sin when she menstruates? Do men or woman sin if they have contracted leprosy or have irregular genital emissions? Leviticus 12-15 tells us that all these people would require a “sin offering.” Does that mean these activities are sinful?*

Sin offerings are offered for any unintentional infraction of any part of God’s law, moral or ceremonial. In the case of those sins listed above, none of them are moral sins, but infractions of the Jewish cleanliness law. Their “guilt” is one of ritual uncleanness. The offering, which is made after one has abstained from entering the temple area for the prescribed amount of time (Leviticus 12:4), reinstates them back into normal temple service. Christ has abolished this cleanliness code (Matthew 15:15-20, Mark 7:4-5, 14-23).

Moreover, the “sin offering,” in these cases, is not for the benefit of the person who has become defiled, but for the sanctuary, so that it will not become defiled by their previous condition. Mary’s “sin offering” in Luke 2:22-24 therefore, has nothing to do with any moral fault. There is nothing sinful about giving birth. The issue is only ceremonial uncleanness.

1 Timothy 2:5 – Jesus is our only mediator, not Mary

"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus..." (1 Timothy 2:5).

Objection: *Jesus Christ, being true God and true man, is the only mediator between God and man. Catholics try to make Mary into another mediator, which contradicts Scripture.*

Answer: *Christ's unique mediation makes possible all other Christian mediation. Otherwise, Paul would not have exhorted Christians at the beginning of the same chapter to pray for others.*

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:1-4).[\[332\]](#)

The reason why our entreaties, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings are acceptable to God is because:

"...there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

If our prayers and petitions do not contradict Christ's unique mediation, there is no reason to suppose that the prayers and petitions of Mary and the other saints and angels in heaven are any different. Mary is not another mediator apart from Christ. She is like us in that our prayers are made possible and effective because they are made in, with, and through Christ's unique mediation.

Appendix 2 Making Sense of Mary Ever-Virgin

There is no other Marian doctrine that seems as patently anti-biblical to many Protestants as the belief that Mary remained a virgin after Jesus' birth. Not only does the New Testament claim that Jesus had brothers and sisters, but it even goes as far as to name them:

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joseph, and Jude, and Simon? Are not also his sisters here with us?" (Mark 6:3)

If Jesus had brothers and sisters, then it can be argued that Mary had other children. It is as simple as that. Case closed. Any attempt to argue the point further is understood as a feeble effort to explain away the plain and unambiguous words of Scripture. The brothers and sisters are brothers and sisters, end of story.

Could They Really Be "Brothers" and "Sisters"?

The funny thing is that, without even looking at Scripture, a thoughtful conservative Christian should know that this last statement, "brothers and sisters are brothers and sisters" cannot be right because it would falsify the Virgin Birth.

What does it mean to be a brother or a sister? Brothers and sisters are siblings who share the same parents. Is it possible for Jesus to have siblings that share the same parents? Jesus was born of a Virgin. Therefore, it is impossible for these family members to be brother and sisters since they could only share one parent. At best, they could only be half-brothers and half-sisters. No Christian who believes in the Virgin Birth should say, "these brothers and sisters are brothers and sisters, end of story." The fact is that Scripture is using these terms in a wider sense than we do today. The real question is, how distant of a blood relation can "brothers" and "sisters" designate?

A quick word study of "brothers" and "sisters" reveals that they can cover a wide range of blood relations. For example, Scripture calls Lot Abraham's "brother" (Genesis 14:14). [\[333\]](#) However, we know that Lot is really Abraham's nephew, the son of Abraham's brother Haran (Genesis 11:26-28). Scripture calls Laban Jacob's "brother" (Genesis 29:15), even though Laban is Jacob's uncle (Genesis 24:29). Elsewhere, Eleazar's daughters are said to marry their "brothers," but these "brothers" are actually their cousins (1 Chronicles 23:21-22). The word "brothers" can even designate more distant relations such as kinsmen (Deuteronomy 23:7; Nehemiah 5:7 and Jeremiah 34:9) and friends who share no apparent blood-relation (2 Samuel 1:26 and Amos 1:9).

As you can see, Scripture has a much wider definition for brothers and sisters than we do. This should not surprise us. Our Bibles are modern English translations of ancient documents that date back thousands of years. Back then, the words "brothers" and "sisters" weren't restricted only to siblings who share the same parents. They had a

much wider meaning.

The Great Cultural Divide

It is very easy to read the Bible through the template of our modern Western culture without realizing it. We read of “brothers” and “sisters” and assume that these words must mean the same thing that we understand them to mean today. “Brothers and sisters means brothers and sisters.” To suggest otherwise, seems patently absurd and an attempt to explain away the clear meaning of the text. Its clarity of meaning, however, comes not from Scripture but from our culture. Other cultures see things differently.

I’m reminded of this fact every time I teach an apologetics course for my Chaldean students. Invariably, when I present the “brothers means brothers” argument, my students (many of whom have recently emigrated to the United States from Iraq) burst out laughing. “Americans really believe that?” The reason for this outburst is that their culture is much closer to that of Jesus than ours. They even speak and worship in Aramaic, Jesus’ native tongue. In their culture, they call all relatives (uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces cousins, and so on) brothers and sisters. To my Chaldean students, the idea that “brother means brother” seems patently absurd.

Western Christians think “brothers” and “sisters” is an open-and-shut case. Eastern Christians think that the opposite is true. Who is right? We know that the New Testament is using “brothers” in a wider meaning since these people could only be half-brothers of Jesus. We also know that Scripture uses “brother” for a wide variety of blood relations. Clearly, the relationship of these “brothers” to Jesus is more distant than what many non-Catholic Christians believe.

Sons of Mary?

Let’s refocus our inquiry on the real question at hand: Were these brothers and sisters the children of Mary?

It is odd that, if these kin were the children of Mary, the New Testament never identifies them as such, even when it would be quite natural to do so. For example, Acts 1:14 states, “These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” Why not say, “...Mary the mother of Jesus and her other sons?” Likewise, the crowd, who would have known Jesus’ true family relationships said:

“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” (Mark 6:3).

The crowd identifies Jesus as “the son of Mary” and the others as His brothers and sisters. Could it be that what distinguished Jesus from the others was that He was “the son of Mary,” while His brothers and sisters were not?

The Joseph Option

If these brothers and sisters were not Mary's children, then whose children were they? It's possible that these siblings may have been children of Joseph, not Mary. [\[334\]](#) Several early Christian writers believed that Joseph was a widower when he betrothed Mary. [\[335\]](#) If this was so, it is quite possible that these "brothers" and "sisters" could have been Joseph's children from a previous marriage.

Although Scripture is silent on Joseph's past, this would explain why the New Testament depicts these "brothers" as being older than Jesus. In John 7:3-5, Jesus' "brothers" give Him advice. In ancient cultures then (and even today in eastern cultures), younger siblings never give advice to older siblings. The absence of any sign of indignation or impropriety suggests that they must have been older than Jesus, but Jesus is Mary's Firstborn (Matthew 1:25, Luke 2:7) making it impossible for these "brothers" to have been her children. If, however, they were the children of Joseph from a previous marriage, they would have been older.

James and Joseph

Given the broader application of the terms "brothers" and "sisters" in the Bible, it is also possible that these "brethren of the Lord" may have been a more distant relationship to Jesus. For example, two of the "brothers" are James and Joseph (Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3). When Matthew 27:56 is compared with John 19:25, we find that James and Joseph are not the sons of the Virgin Mary, but the sons of "the other Mary" (Matthew 28:1), the wife of Clophas (Alphaeus). [\[336\]](#)

The Foot of the Cross

Another indication that these "brothers" were not Mary's children is found in the fact that Jesus gave Mary into the care of John at the foot of the Cross (John 19:26-27). If Jesus had had closer blood relatives (like half-brothers and half-sisters), He should have given Mary into their care, not John's. Jesus' actions indicate that John was His closest blood relative. (See chapter 9 for additional details).

Given the biblical use of the words "brothers" and "sisters," the possible identification of two of these "brothers" (James and Joseph) as more distant relatives, and the possibility that Joseph had other children, and Christ's giving Mary to John, the case against Mary's virginity (post partum) is anything but a slam dunk.

Biblical Rationale

Why didn't Joseph have relations with Mary after Christ's birth? Is there any biblical rationale for Joseph's celibacy? Absolutely. There are several explanations, but due to the scope of the present work, we will focus only on one explanation, namely, the application of Deuteronomy 24:1-3 to Joseph's unique situation. [\[337\]](#)

Deuteronomy 24:1-3 gives the regulations for divorce and the propriety of a man's reuniting with a divorced spouse after she had married another.

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes ...he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance (emphasis mine).

In the Old Covenant, when a wife is lawfully divorced, then remarried, and later lawfully set free of her second husband (through another divorce or the death of the spouse), the first husband is forbidden to take her back as his wife. The law is quite strong on this point. The prophet Jeremiah applies this legislation to the spiritual infidelity of Israel:

"God says, 'If a husband divorces his wife And she goes from him And belongs to another man, Will he still return to her? Will not that land be completely polluted? But you are a harlot with many lovers; Yet you turn to Me,' declares the LORD" (Jeremiah 3:1).

Jeremiah's point is that Israel cannot return to God because she has consorted with "many lovers."

In 2 Samuel 20:3, Deuteronomy has a different application. When King David's son Absalom rebelled against his father, he took ten of David's concubines and slept with them (2 Samuel 15:16, 16:21-22). After Absalom's death, David had to make a decision. These ten concubines, who were married to David, were the unwilling victims of Absalom's actions. They were not guilty of sin. However, Deuteronomy did not allow a husband to take back his wife (or wives) after they had been with another man, so David decides the following:

"Then David came to his house at Jerusalem, and the king took the ten women, the concubines whom he had left to keep the house, and placed them under guard and provided them with sustenance, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as widows" (2 Samuel 20:3).

David remained married to the concubines and continued to provide for them since they were innocent in the matter, but he did not have any conjugal relations with these wives because to do so would have been an abomination and a defilement on the land (Deuteronomy 24:3).

Joseph found himself in a similar situation to David's. Joseph was betrothed to Mary, but before he had relations with her, she was with child. Joseph decided to divorce her

quietly (Matthew 1:19) only to learn in a dream that Mary was not guilty of any infidelity (Matthew 1:20-21). She had conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Could Joseph lawfully have marital relations with Mary after Jesus' birth?

Joseph followed in his forefather's footsteps. David took back his wives and did not divorce them because they were innocent of any infidelity, but he had no relations with them because they had been with another man. Joseph received Mary and did not divorce her because she was innocent of any impropriety, but being a righteous man, he would not violate Deuteronomy 24:1-3 because she had conceived a child by the power of the Holy Spirit. Both cases are similar, but with one major difference. David refrained from marital relations to avoid defilement. Joseph, however, refrained because Mary's womb had been sanctified, set apart, for God. [\[338\]](#)

Historical Question

Whether Mary had other children after Jesus is also a question for history. Those who knew Mary also knew whether or not she had had other children. This information would not have ended with them, but it would have been common knowledge among Christians in succeeding generations. Think about it. If you knew that your great-great-grandfather's mother was Mary, the Mother of Christ, wouldn't you want people to know?

The evidence from history runs against Mary's having children other than Jesus. The second century work *Protoevangelium of James* and such early writers as Origen, [\[339\]](#) Hilary of Poitiers, [\[340\]](#) Athanasius, [\[341\]](#) and Epiphanius [\[342\]](#) were only a few generations removed from Jesus, and many afterwards affirmed that Mary was Ever-Virgin.

At the end of the fourth century, Jerome wrote a response to Helvidius, who believed Mary had other children - assessing the historical data in regards to this question:

"...[Helvidius]...produces Tertullian as a witness and quotes the words of Victorinus bishop of Petavium. Of Tertullian I say no more than that he did not belong to the Church. But as regards Victorinus, I assert what has already been proved from the Gospel — that he spoke of the brethren of the Lord not as being sons of Mary, but brethren in the sense I have explained, that is to say, brethren in point of kinship not by nature. We are, however, spending our strength on trifles, and, leaving the fountain of truth, are following the tiny streams of opinion. Might I not array against you the whole series of ancient writers? Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenæus, Justin Martyr, and many other apostolic and eloquent men, who against Ebion, Theodotus of Byzantium, and Valentinus, held these same views, and wrote volumes replete with wisdom. If you had ever read what they wrote, you would be a wiser man." [\[343\]](#)

Even granting Jerome's propensity for exaggeration in debate, he claims to have history on his side. This is quite a claim since Jerome was writing near the end of the fourth

Christian century!

Conclusion

The claim that Mary had other children is largely due to a misunderstanding of the ancient use of the words “brothers” and “sisters.” Once this misunderstanding is cleared away, one can begin to examine evidence for and against Mary’s remaining a virgin after the birth of Christ. The question, relying solely on biblical material, is anything but a slam dunk for either position. However, there are indications that Jesus’ “brothers” are older than him and had a more distant relationship with Him than John had. Both propositions argue against these “brothers” being the children of Mary. The historical evidence, likewise, points towards Mary being Ever–Virgin.

Bible Christians who believe Mary had other children are left with a few unsettling biblical facts. First, they believe something that is never explicitly taught in Scripture. Scripture never claims that the “brothers” and “sisters” are children of Mary. Second, there is nothing in sacred Scripture to prevent the possibility that Joseph had other children by a previous marriage. We often assume that since it is not mentioned in Scripture such could not be the case, but silence can go both ways. Given the fact that there is some historical evidence in favor of Joseph’s having children by a previous wife, it is up to the Bible Christian to prove otherwise. Finally, the Bible Christian is forced, if he or she believes in the Virgin Birth, to admit that these “brothers” and “sisters” can only be “half brothers” and “half-sisters.” If this is the case, then the question is no longer whether the siblings are “brothers” and “sisters,” but “How distant could the blood relationship be?” It is incumbent upon the Bible Christian, therefore, to demonstrate from the text of Scripture that these “brothers” and “sisters” are children of Mary.

Appendix 3 Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown on Jeremiah 31:22

A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments, better known by its editors' last names, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (J.F.B.) is a classic Protestant commentary on the Scripture. The following is an excerpt from their explanation of Jeremiah 31:22:

"To assure them of this, God promises to create a new thing in their land, A woman shall compass a man. Calvin explains this: Israel, who is feeble as a woman, shall be superior to the warlike Chaldeans; the captives shall reduce their captors to captivity. Hengstenberg makes the "woman" the Jewish Church, and the "man" Jehovah, her husband, whose love she will again seek (Hos 2:6, Hos 2:7). Maurer, A woman shall protect (Deu 32:10, Margin; Psa 32:10) a man, that is, You need fear no foes in returning, for all things shall be so peaceful that a woman would be able to take man's part, and act as his protector. But the Christian fathers (Augustine, etc.) almost unanimously interpreted it of the Virgin Mary compassing Christ in her womb. This view is favored: - (1) By the connection; it gives a reason why the exiles should desire a return to their country, namely, because Christ was conceived there. (2) The word "created" implies a divine power put forth in the creation of a body in the Virgin's womb by the Holy Ghost for the second Adam, such as was exerted in creating the first Adam (Luke 1:35; Heb 10:5). (3) The phrase, "a new thing," something unprecedented; a man whose like had never existed before, at once God and man; a mother out of the ordinary course of nature, at once mother and virgin. An extraordinary mode of generation; one conceived by the Holy Ghost without man. (4) The specification "in the land" (not "earth," as English Version), namely, of Judah, where probably Christ was conceived, in Hebron (compare Luke 1:39, 1:42, 1:44, with Jos 21:11) or else in Nazareth, "in the territory" of Israel, to whom Jer 31:5-6, 31:15, 31:18, 31:21 refer; His birth was at Bethlehem (Mic 5:2; Mat 2:5-6). As the place of His nativity, and of His being reared (Mat 2:23), and of His preaching (Hag 2:7; Mal 3:1), are specified, so it is likely the Holy Spirit designated the place of His being conceived. (5) The Hebrew for "woman" implies an individual, as the Virgin Mary, rather than a collection of persons. (6) The restoration of Israel is grounded on God's covenant in Christ, to whom, therefore, allusion is naturally made as the foundation of Israel's hope (compare Isa 7:14). The Virgin Mary's conception of Messiah in the womb answers to the "Virgin of Israel" (therefore so called, Jer 31:21), that is, Israel and her sons at their final restoration, receiving Jesus as Messiah (Zec 12:10). (7) The reference to the conception of the child Messiah accords with the mention of the massacre of "children" referred to in Jer 31:15 (compare Mat 2:17). (8) The Hebrew for "man" is properly "mighty man," a term applied to God (Deu 10:17); and to Christ (Zec 13:7; compare Psa 45:3; Isa 9:6) [Calovius]." [\[344\]](#)

Appendix 4 Making Sense of Mary: Virgin in Body and Spirit

Christians usually don't talk very much about virginity unless it is within a Teen Chastity program. Even from the pulpit, it is rare to hear a sermon about the virtues of virginity. This is perhaps due to the influence of western culture, which has turned its back on, and even attacks, the virtues of chastity and purity. For Christians, however, virginal purity is still important, not only in regards to teens' (and adults') living a chaste life, but also doctrinally. It is especially important in regards to Mary whose virginity is the foundation for the Virgin Birth.

There is a tendency, however, among Christians to reduce virginity to nothing more than physical purity, namely, the abstinence from sexual relations before marriage or after a spouse dies. The New Testament, however, does not reduce virginity to physical abstinence, but involves the whole person, as Paul wrote:

"...The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband" (1 Corinthians 7:34).

Paul sees virginity as having two dimensions, physical (body) and spiritual (spirit). Since holiness means to be "set apart for sacred use," virgins "set apart" both their bodies and spirits for God. Married people are concerned with the cares of the world, how to please their spouse. Virgins, on the other hand are simple or single-minded. They are concerned only with "the things of the Lord." Not being divided in mind and heart, virgins dedicate their whole self to God.

In Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, he applies this full two-dimensional view of virginity to Eve and to the Christians in Corinth:

"For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2-3). [\[345\]](#)

Let's follow Paul's analogy. He betrothed the Corinthians as a "pure virgin" [Greek, "parthenon hagen"] to "one husband" Christ, just as Eve was once betrothed to Adam as a pure virgin. By pure virgin, Paul means the full biblical understanding of virginity, dedicated in body and spirit. From this we understand that Eve was physically devoted to Adam as his flesh and bone (Genesis 2:23) and single-minded in her devotion to her husband as his helpmate.

Paul warns the Corinthians that despite this devotion Eve was "led astray." The Greek word translated "led astray" (phtheiro) also carries with it a sense of being corrupted,

defiled, or even seduced (see Ephesians 4:22, 1 Timothy 6:5, Revelation 19:2). Eve's deception resulted in infidelity, not physically, since Eve remained a physical virgin after the Serpent's temptation, but spiritually. She was no longer "pure" and "simple" (single-minded) in her dedication to Adam, but she had become friends with the Serpent.

Paul uses the seduction of Eve as a warning for Christians in 2 Corinthians 11:2-3. They too, were betrothed to one husband just as Eve was. Eve lost her original purity and single-minded dedication to her husband through the craftiness of the serpent. Paul warns the Corinthians not to follow Eve, but to remain faithful.

By applying to Eve the idea of virginity's being body and spirit, Paul's application impacts and deepens our understanding of Mary as the New Eve. This did not escape the notice of several early Christian writers.

For example, Justin Martyr (ca. 150) wrote:

*"...He [Christ] became man by the Virgin, in order that the disobedience which proceeded from the serpent might receive its destruction in the same manner in which it derived its origin. For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled [Greek, *aphthoros*] having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her that...[through her child]...God destroys both the serpent and those angels and men who are like him; but works deliverance from death to those who repent of their wickedness and believe upon Him." [346]*

*Before meeting the Serpent, Eve was "a virgin and undefiled." Here Justin uses the same Greek word that Paul used in 2 Corinthians 11:3 translated "led astray" (*phthoros*), only with an alpha privative (*a-*). Eve starts off "undefiled" (*aphthoros*). She is a "holy virgin," single-minded, innocent, and without sin. This changes when the Serpent approaches Eve and speaks to her. Justin writes:*

"[Eve]...having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death."

Notice how Justin describes Eve's deception using procreative terms. Eve "conceives" the Serpent's word, as a woman conceives a child. [347] She then "brought forth" disobedience and death. The word translated "brought forth" is commonly used in Scripture for a woman delivering a child or giving birth. [348] Did Justin believe that the Serpent impregnated Eve? Of course he didn't. Eve didn't give birth to a child until much later (Genesis 4:1). She "brought forth," not a child, but "disobedience and death." [349] She became spiritually, not physically, "defiled." [350]

Justin transitions from one virgin to another without any qualifications. Mary is a virgin as well. Only when the angel spoke to her, she "received" (not conceived) his words "with faith and joy." [351] The angel's word did not corrupt Mary, rather she remained a

pure virgin in body and spirit and she gave birth to Christ, who destroys “the serpent and those angels and men who are like him.”

Justin’s parallel implies that both Eve and Mary were virgins, in the full biblical sense, in body and spirit. After an angel approached both women, Eve became spiritually defiled (she conceived and brought forth disobedience and death) while Mary retained her virginal purity (she received the word with faith and joy and brought forth Christ, our Life). In what sense or how was Eve a virgin in spirit? She was created in God’s favor, innocent, and without sin. In what sense or how was Mary a virgin in spirit? Since Justin distinguishes the two only by their response to the angels’ words, Mary must also have been created like Eve, in God’s favor, innocent, and without sin as well. Otherwise, Justin’s parallelism falls apart and God did not destroy the “disobedience that proceeded from the serpent...in the same manner in which it derived its origin.”

Ephrem of Syria (d. 373) makes explicit what Justin implied:

"Two innocent [women]

two simple [women]

Mary and Eve

arranged (created) in equality

One caused our death

the other our life. "[352]

Ephrem pairs Mary and Eve as equals (before the Fall). God created Eve and Mary “innocent” and “simple” (single-minded). Ephrem, like Justin, distinguishes Mary and Eve only in regards to their response to an angel. Eve sinned and “caused our death” and “the other” (Mary) remained faithful and [caused] our life, that is she brought forth Christ.

Both Justin and Ephrem speak of Eve and Mary the same way. Both begin as pure virgins in body and spirit, only Eve becomes defiled and brings forth sin and death while Mary bring forth Christ, our Life. But did Ephrem really mean that Mary was, like Eve, in God’s favor from the first moment of her life?

Elsewhere, Ephrem writes:

"Truly, you [Lord] and your Mother are the only ones who are absolutely and completely beautiful; for there is no guilt in you, Lord, nor any stain in your Mother...Adam did not procreate you [plural], who dared to transgress the law..."[353]

Both Jesus and Mary are “absolutely and completely beautiful” in that they are spiritually undefiled. The last line of this quotation is interesting. Ephrem says, “Adam did not

procreate you..." He is not denying that Jesus and Mary are descendants of Adam (Luke 3:38), but they were not of the fallen race of Adam; they have "no guilt" or "stain," being "absolutely and completely beautiful" just as Adam and Eve were before they sinned.

Ambrose of Milan (ca. 388) likewise wrote of Mary being virgin in body and spirit:

"Lift me up bodily and in the flesh, which is fallen in Adam. Lift me up not from Sara but from Mary, a virgin not only undefiled but a virgin whom grace had made inviolate, free of every stain of sin."[\[354\]](#)

Ambrose's thought transitions from his fleshly body (fallen in Adam) to Mary who is an undefiled virgin in body and in spirit. She is a virgin "whom grace had made inviolate, free from every stain of sin."

Gregory of Nazianzen wrote:

"He was conceived by the Virgin, who had first been purified by the Spirit in soul and body; for, as it was fitting that childbearing should receive its share of honor, so it was necessary that virginity should receive even greater honor."[\[355\]](#)

Jerome takes up the same idea of Mary's being Virgin in body and spirit in a letter he wrote to Eustochium, a rich teenage patrician girl who had entered into a life of consecrated virginity. Jerome wrote:

"Say not: 'So-and-so enjoys her own property, she is honored of men, her brothers and sisters come to see her. Has she then ceased to be a virgin?' In the first place, it is doubtful if she is a virgin. For 'the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.' Again, she may be a virgin in body and not in spirit. According to the apostle, a true virgin is 'holy both in body and in spirit.' Lastly, let her glory in her own way. Let her override Paul's opinion and live in the enjoyment of her good things. But you and I must follow better examples. Set before you the blessed Mary, whose surpassing purity made her meet to be the mother of the Lord..." (Letter 22, 38).

Jerome understood that virginity entails the whole person, body and soul. Someone who is physically a virgin may not be so spiritually, such as the woman mentioned in the letter. These people care for the things of this world. Jerome proposes that both he and Eustochium follow "better examples," namely the Virgin Mary, "whose surpassing in purity made her meet [fit] to be the mother of the Lord." In this context, The Virgin Mary's surpassing purity is not merely in body, but also (perhaps especially) in spirit. Augustine wrote:

"For it behooved that our Head, on account of a notable miracle, should be born after the flesh of a virgin, that He might thereby signify that His members would be born after the Spirit, of the Church a virgin: therefore Mary alone both in spirit and in flesh is a mother

and a virgin: both the mother of Christ, and a virgin of Christ; but the Church, in the Saints who shall possess the kingdom of God, in the Spirit indeed is altogether the mother of Christ, altogether a virgin of Christ: but in the flesh not altogether, but in certain a virgin of Christ, in certain a mother, but not of Christ. Forsooth both faithful women who are married, and virgins dedicated to God, by holy manners, and charity out of a pure heart, and good conscience, and faith unfeigned, because they do the will of the Father, are after a spiritual sense mothers of Christ." [\[356\]](#)

For Augustine, Mary is a virgin holy in body and spirit. She is the mother of Christ and the virgin of Christ, respectively. The Church is also the mother of Christ (in a spiritual sense because it does the will of the Father) and spiritually the virgin of Christ.

The Church, in this context, consists of the regenerate. They are members of Christ's Body who are "born after the Spirit." We know from Paul that after the "washing of water with the word" the Church is immaculate, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). By comparing this Church with Mary, Augustine suggests (like the authors quoted above) that she too was spiritually innocent and undefiled.

In a work attributed to Theodotus of Ancyra (d. ca. 445), the Eve and New Eve parallel is revisited in terms of Mary's virginity of body and soul:

"Instead of the virgin Eve, who was unto us the instrument of death, God, for the purpose of giving life, chose [foreordained] a virgin most pleasing to Himself and full of grace. Who, included in woman's sex, was free from woman's sin, a virgin innocent, without taint, holy in soul and body, as a lily budding in the midst of thorns, unlearned in the evils of Eve... [W]ho was a daughter of Adam, but unlike him." [\[357\]](#)

God replaces Eve with Mary by choosing (or foreordaining) Mary to be "a virgin most pleasing to Himself and full of grace... a virgin innocent, without taint, holy in soul and body..." The writer describes Mary as beginning something new in the order of generation. She is "included in woman's sex" but "free from woman's sin." Like a New Eve planted in the midst of fallen humanity, Mary is a "lily budding in the midst of thorns." She is like Eve before the Fall, but unlearned in her evil ways. Mary is a "daughter of Adam," and yet she is unlike Adam. Eve was a virgin innocent, without taint, holy in soul and body and so was Mary, only the former became for us "the instrument of death" while God chose Mary "for the purpose of giving life."

Eve became defiled and unfaithful, Mary remained undefiled and faithful, as another ancient Christian author wrote:

"...Destruction through Eve, salvation through Mary. The former [Eve] was corrupt and followed the Seducer; the latter [Mary] remained intact and gave birth to the savior." [\[358\]](#)

Echoing Paul, Justin Martyr, and Ephrem, Eve became corrupt and followed the Serpent. Mary, however, “remained intact” and gave birth to the Savior. The implication is that Mary was uncorrupted by sin prior to the angel’s visit and unlike Eve she remained the same afterwards.

John Damascene also wrote:

"Then planted in the House of God and increased by the Spirit, like a fruitful olive tree, she became the home of every virtue, turning her mind away from every secular and carnal desire, and thus keeping her soul as well as her body virginal, as was meet for her who was to receive God into her bosom: for as He is holy, He finds rest among the holy. Thus, therefore, she strove after holiness, and was declared a holy and wonderful temple fit for the most high God... She ministered to the Creator in that He was created, to the Fashioner in that He was fashioned, and to the Son of God and God in that He was made flesh and became man from her pure and immaculate flesh and blood, satisfying the debt of the first mother. For just as the latter was formed from Adam without connection, so also did the former bring forth the new Adam, who was brought forth in accordance with the laws of parturition and above the nature of generation." [\[359\]](#)

Like those quoted above, John Damascene views Mary and Eve through the Pauline teaching of virginity; both body and spirit. Paul taught that virgins and the unmarried are not concerned with the world, but with the things of the Lord. John teaches that Mary is the “home of every virtue” and that she too is single-minded, “turning her mind away from every secular and carnal desire, and thus keeping her soul as well as her body virginal.” John Damascene is applying Paul’s teaching on virginity to Mary. Mary is “simple” or “single-minded.”

Mary’s resolute faithfulness and spiritual purity made her fit to satisfy the debt of the first mother, Eve. What was this debt? Eve was formed from Adam “without connection,” so Christ is formed from Mary “in accordance with the laws of parturition and above the nature of generation.” But don’t think that this debt regards only Mary’s bodily virginity. It is spiritual as well.

God created Eve from the pure and immaculate flesh and blood of Adam. They were two virgins who were holy in body and spirit. John Damascene says that God became flesh from Mary’s “pure and immaculate flesh and blood.” Two virgins were also holy in body and soul. Mary is “home of every virtue” and she was “declared a holy and wonderful temple fit for the most high.” It is within this larger context that John Damascene says that the “debt of the first mother” is satisfied. If this is so, then the pure and immaculate conception of Mary is a necessary part of God’s perfect plan of redemption (See Chapter 3).

Conclusion

Paul’s teaching on virginity and his application of it to Eve deepen our understanding of

Mary. God created Eve from the side of her sinless husband, pure, innocent, and undefiled, a virgin holy in body and spirit, single-minded in her devotion to Adam. God created Mary to be the New Eve, chosen in anticipation of the New Adam, pure, innocent, undefiled, also a virgin holy in body and spirit, single-minded in her devotion to the New Adam.

By believing the Serpent's lie, Eve changed. She became defiled, not physically, since she remained physically a virgin, but spiritually. She conceived sin and brought forth disobedience and death. Mary did not turn from God. She remained pure and holy believing the word of Gabriel, and brought forth Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6).

Christians recognized that Mary was a virgin in body and spirit quite early. Justin Martyr appears to be the first, writing around the middle of the second Christian century. Although this teaching is biblical and important, it was overshadowed in the early Church by a more pressing need to defend and explain the Virgin Birth. Because of this, most Christian writers of the time focused almost exclusively on Mary's bodily virginity. However, as we have seen, a few ancient writers applied the full Pauline view of virginity to Mary as the New Eve.

How do we look at Mary today? Do we look at her only in terms of her physical virginity? Or do we look at Mary's virginity as Paul viewed virginity, in terms of both body and spirit? When Christians, both ancient and modern, view Mary as the New Eve only in terms of her physical virginity, the result is simple. Eve was a virgin when the Devil approached her and Mary was a virgin when the angel approached her. However, when Christians view Mary as the New Eve in light of Paul's understanding of virginity, a new dimension comes to light. God created two immaculate Virgins in body and spirit, Eve and Mary. Eve's spiritual purity became defiled by the Devil while Mary's spiritual purity remained intact. Eve gave birth to fallen humanity and Mary gave birth to Christ. As you can see, through this Pauline view of virginity, we gain a fuller and deeper appreciation of the incredible love and dedication of God in our redemption. God did not leave a stone unturned in his most perfect redemption and reparation of all that had been lost in the beginning.

^[1] We are using the term "worship" in its modern sense. The meaning of worship, like nearly all words, changes with time. Today, worship denotes the honor due only to God, but this was not always the case. Worship was once used for any act of honor. This archaic use can be found in old Protestant and Catholic prayer books and other religious material. For example, the Anglican marriage ceremony once included a line where the groom tells the bride, "...with my body I thee worship." The English also retain the archaic use when they address a mayor, magistrate, or person of high ranking as "Your Worship." In the United States, we respect judges with the modern meaning of "Your Worship" when we say "Your Honor."

^[2] Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), paragraph 2113.

^[3] Mormonism erroneously teaches that God the Father is an exalted man of flesh and bone (see Joseph Smith,

Journal of Discourses, Volume 6, 3-4).

[\[4\]](#) Catholic and Protestants share this core principle of God's transcendence.

[\[5\]](#) God can only be compared to His creation by way of analogy (Romans 1:20). In fact, we know more about what God is not than what He is by observing creation.

[\[6\]](#) God's absolute transcendence, however, does not mean that He is completely unknown or unknowable because God's attributes, His eternal power and divine nature can be understood by analogy through the things He has made (Romans 1:20). Moreover, God has also revealed Himself through the prophets and definitively through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2).

[\[7\]](#) Wisdom 14:21. The book of Wisdom, even although Protestants do not accept it as Scripture, nevertheless illustrates Jewish thought shortly before the time of Jesus. The divine name was and still is a *sine qua non* for identifying God. It is "incommunicable" (Greek, *akoinoneo*).

[\[8\]](#) See The New World Translation (NWT) Hebrews 1:3.

[\[9\]](#) See The Truth Shall Make You Free, (Brooklyn, NY: WTBT, 1943) p.47, Watchtower, September 1, 1955, p.543, and John 1:1 NWT. Jehovah's Witnesses claim Jesus is a "mighty god" while Jehovah is both "mighty" and "Almighty" God (Watchtower, September 15, 1961, p.551).

[\[10\]](#) The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society even published a study book by this title.

[\[11\]](#) See Epiphanius of Salamis, Panarion, Section 7, Heresy 79.

[\[12\]](#) For example, Jesus alone is given the Name that is above every other name (Philippians 2:10; compare Isaiah 45:23 and Isaiah 41:4-5 with Revelation 1:17, 2:8, 22:13), and He possesses God's infinite glory (John 17:5).

[\[13\]](#) Emphasis mine.

[\[14\]](#) Psalms 137:6 offers a good example of how hyperbole can be legitimately used in devotions even though it might be misconstrued by those who are looking to find fault. The Psalmist exalts Jerusalem "beyond all" of his delights." A less scrupulous person may accuse the Psalmist of blasphemy since we are to delight in God (Psalms 37:4, 112:1, 119:174), insinuating that the Psalmist places Jerusalem over God. This, of course, is nonsense. In a similar fashion, anti-Catholics sometimes point to hyperbole in older Catholic works about Mary and misconstrue it as "proof" that Catholics worship Mary as a goddess, or some other nonsense. The reader ought to beware of dishonest tactics such as these.

[\[15\]](#) "The Virgin shows that not for her own virtue is she to be pronounced blessed, but she assigns the cause saying, 'For he that is mighty has magnified me'" (Theophylact, Commentary on Luke, 1:49, Migne, P.G. 123, 710).

[\[16\]](#) The theological term for this level of honor is *hyperdulia* (high honor), as distinguished from *dulia* (honor) and the honor of worship due to God alone (*latria*).

[\[17\]](#) If God's plan were not perfect or perfectly carried out, we would be left with certain unacceptable conclusions, such as that God's plan of redemption wasn't perfect (1) because He couldn't bring about a perfect plan of Redemption, which would deny His omnipotence and omniscience, or (2) He didn't desire for redemption to be perfect, which would mean that God lacks love, mercy, and justice. Since neither of these possibilities are acceptable or even possible, we ought to affirm that God's plan of redemption is perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing.

[\[18\]](#) Colossians 2:15.

[\[19\]](#) Our approach to the second and third chapters of Genesis will be to regard them as a straightforward historical narrative. We will not use the so-called "higher critical" methods. The reason for this is that most non-Catholics who read this book will probably not accept these methods, and the New Testament and the early Church fathers do not use these methods either. Our goal is to develop a broad patristic-biblical view of the Genesis 1-3 that would be acceptable to both Catholics and Protestants.

[\[20\]](#) Paul references this text in regards to Adam's "earthly" body coming before the Second Adam's "spiritual" body (1 Corinthians 15:47-48).

[\[21\]](#) If this is so, the situation is drastically reversed after Adam's fall when no one may behold the face of God and live (Exodus 33:20, Leviticus 16:2, et al.).

[22] *Emphasis mine.*

[23] *Emphasis mine.*

[24] *Emphasis mine. Some translations render Genesis 2:23 as “This at last is...” (e.g., ESV, NET, NAB, NJB, NRSV, and the Tanakh).*

[25] *“For as Adam was a figure of Christ, Adam’s sleep shadowed out the death of Christ, who was to sleep a mortal slumber, that from the wound inflicted on His side might, in like manner (as Eve was formed), be typified the church, the true mother of the living” (Tertullian, Treatise on the Soul, 43).*

[26] *We used to speak of “plighting one’s troth” that is “making a pledge of fidelity.”*

[27] *The idea of Adam being the covenant representative in the marriage may rub some people the wrong way. Sadly, male headship within marriage has suffered from gross misunderstanding and abuse over the years. Such headship is not and should not in any way be belittling or denigrating to women. Scripture teaches the opposite. Genesis, chapters 1 and 2, shows us that women are not inferior to men, quite the opposite. The Woman is the summit and crown of creation. Moreover, Christ, although equal to God in His divinity, took the lowest place, “the form of a slave” (Philippians 2:7). But Christ became incarnate as a man, not a woman. This shows that covenant headship is one of service, not supremacy.*

[28] *1 Timothy 2:11-14, cf. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.*

[29] *Irenaeus of Lyons, Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching, 14.*

[30] *Again, we have a wordplay in Hebrew where ‘arum in 3:1 ties in with ‘arumim in Genesis 2:25. Before Satan in his cunning deceived them, they were naked and not ashamed. After Satan had deceived them, they were naked AND ashamed.*

[31] *The NIV, RSV, NRSV render “advice” (Hebrew, `etsah / Greek LXX, phronēsis) as “schemes.” The Tanakh and the New Jerusalem Bible translate it as “plans.” Craftiness, therefore is associated with plotting, devising, and scheming.*

[32] *Early Christian writers sometimes cited Genesis 49:17 as a prophecy that the future anti-Christ would come from the tribe of Dan. It is interesting that Dan is the only tribe omitted among the tribes listed concerning the 144,000 in Revelation 7:4-8.*

[33] *Wisdom 2:23-24. Protestantism does not accept the Book of Wisdom as inspired Scripture. Nevertheless, the Book of Wisdom does reflect Jewish thought shortly before the time of Christ. The early Christians, likewise, echoed Wisdom’s identification of envy as the motivating force behind the Devil’s actions. I examine the pedigree of the Book of Wisdom and the other books of the “Apocrypha” in my book Why Catholic Bibles Are Bigger: The Untold Story of the Lost Books of the Protestant Bible (Grotto Press: 2007).*

[34] *Matthew 27:18 and Mark 15:10. The word translated envy (Greek, phthonos) is the same as used in Wisdom 2:24. Emphasis mine.*

[35] *John 8:44.*

[36] *The early Church likewise identified envy as the Devil’s motivation (Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book 5, 24, 4; Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching, 16; Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, 2, 13; Tertullian, On Patience, 5; Apology, 27; Cyprian, Treatise 10, On Jealousy and Envy, 3-4, and others).*

[37] *Romans 5:12. Emphasis mine.*

[38] *Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologicae, I-II, Q. 81, Art. 5, sed contra.*

[39] *As Irenaeus of Lyons wrote, “...[B]ecause of the original formation of Adam all of us were tied and bound up with death through his disobedience, it was right that through the obedience of Him (Christ) who was made man for us we should be released from death; it was right that through the flesh it should lose its force and let man go free from its oppression” (Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching, 31).*

[40] *Adam and Eve’s marriage also reflected their covenant with God. Scripture frequently uses the analogy of marital imagery to describe God’s relationship with His covenant People (Isaiah 54:5, Hosea 2:19, 20, etc.). Adam’s sin, like the iconoclasm of old, smashes and destroys this image of God’s covenantal love, which was, no doubt, seen as an added bonus for the Serpent.*

[41] *God had earlier charged Adam to keep or guard the garden (Genesis 2:15). Was Adam delinquent in his duty*

to guard by allowing the Serpent into the garden, or were they caught unaware because the Serpent's intention was not known until it was too late?

[42] Augustine, *City of God*, Book 14, 11.

[43] Emphasis mine.

[44] 2 Chronicles 6:30, Psalms 44:21, 139:23, et al.

[45] Emphasis mine.

[46] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Fragment* 14.

[47] For the Catholic understanding of this death, please consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), 402-406.

[48] 1 Timothy 2:14.

[49] Severianus of Syria (d. after 408), *Concerning the Creation of the World* (*De mundi creatione*), orat. 6, 8; Migne, P.G., 56, 495, as cited in as cited in Dominic J. Unger's *The First Gospel: Genesis 3:15*, *Theology Series* No.1, ed. E. M. Buytaesert, (Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1954), p. 119.

[50] For example, Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386) wrote, "...you crafty and most subtle serpent...who under the guise of friendship contrived all disobedience, and work apostasy in our first parents" (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 19, 4).

[51] As mentioned earlier, the early Christians understood the temptation of Eve as a spiritual seduction or spiritual adultery.

[52] James 2:23, 2 Chronicles 20:7, and Isaiah 41:8.

[53] James 4:4. In the following verses, James speaks of resisting the devil, God resisting the proud, growing close to the humble, and exaltation by God. All of this would be fitting advice for Adam and his wife.

[54] Sirach 25:23 [24]. Sirach, like the Book of Wisdom, is not considered canonical Scripture by Protestants. Nevertheless, it does reflect the views of the Jews who live shortly before the time of Christ. Emphasis mine.

[55] Through the fall of Adam we all suffer spiritual death and death reigns. See Romans 5:15, 17.

[56] Chrysippus of Jerusalem (d. 479), *Oratio in Sanctam Mariam Deiparam*, 3. Emphasis mine. Other early Christians saw the necessity of the woman's full cooperation in the Devil's plan as well.

[57] Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum*, 2, 28.

[58] Tertullian (d. 217/222), *On the Apparel of Woman*, Book 1, 1, Emphasis mine.

[59] No words of the woman are recorded in Genesis 3:6. However, Genesis 3:17 implies that words were spoken suggesting that the Woman had also counseled Adam to eat the forbidden fruit that she had offered him.

[60] Some early Christian writers noticed an interesting correspondence of words in God's curses. When God cursed the Serpent (the Devil) He condemned him with the words, "...dust you will eat All the days of your life" (Genesis 3:14). Here, Adam and his progeny are condemned to return to the dust of the earth in death (the same Hebrew word for "dust" is used in both passage). Could this be a cryptic allusion by God suggesting that death has now entered into the world and that the devil, through fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15), has a certain power over man?

[61] Genesis 2:17.

[62] Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 180), *Against Heresies*, Book 3, 23, 3.

[63] Tertullian, *Five Books Against Marcion*, Book 2, 25.

[64] Adam was "crowned with glory and honor" (Psalms 8:6) and the deuterocanonical book of Sirach, mentioned earlier, says "Glorious, too, were SHEM and SETH and ENOS; but beyond that of any living being was the splendor of ADAM" (Sirach 49:16).

Irenaeus of Lyons, "And He [God] set him [Adam] certain limitations, so that, if he should keep the commandment of God, he should ever remain such as he was, that is to say, immortal; but if he should not keep it, he should become mortal and be dissolved to earth from whence his formation had been taken" *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*, 15.

Leo the Great (d. 461) wrote: "For the first man received the substance of flesh from the earth, and was quickened

with a rational spirit by the in-breathing of his Creator, so that living after the image and likeness of his Maker, he might preserve the form of GOD'S goodness and righteousness as in a bright mirror. And, if he had perseveringly maintained this high dignity of his nature by observing the Law that was given him, his uncorrupt mind would have raised the character even of his earthly body to heavenly glory. But because in unhappy rashness he trusted the envious deceiver, and agreeing to his presumptuous counsels, preferred to forestall rather than to win the increase of honour that was in store for him, not only did that one man, but in him all that came after him also hear the verdict: 'earth thou art, and unto earth shalt thou go;' 'as in the earthy,' therefore, 'such are they also that are earthy,' and no one is immortal, because no one is heavenly" (On the Feast of the Nativity, Sermon 24, 4, 2).

[65] Eve (Hebrew, hawwa) possibly being a word play on the Hebrew word for "living" (Hebrew, hay).

[66] The New American Bible makes just that sort of suggestion.

[67] Epiphanius of Salamis (d. 403), *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Book II and III (Sects 47-80, De Fide)*, Trans. Frank Williams, (Leiden and New York: E. J. BRILL, 1994), p. 614; Section VII, Heresy 58, 18, 1-2.

[68] That is born without God's Sanctifying Grace.

[69] Epiphanius writes, "It is Mary who is meant by the description of Eve, for she was symbolically given the title, 'mother of the living'...Physically speaking, every human being in the world is born of that Eve; but here life itself has truly been born into the world of Mary, so that Mary brings forth the Living One and becomes the mother of the Living" (Epiphanius, *Panarion*, VII, Heresy 58, 18, 1-3).

[70] A similar command is given to Noah and his household after the flood without the command to rule and have dominion over the earth (cf. Genesis 9:7).

[71] Genesis 1:28.

[72] Romans 5:14, 21.

[73] Epiphanius, *Panarion*, Section VII, 9, 1; Frank Williams trans. p. 628.

[74] Earlier, we made a distinction between the Fall itself and that which resulted from the Fall. Here, I am speaking about our completed Redemption in Christ, not how Christ's Redemption is still being applied to each new Christian. Even more, this Redemption will not reach its completion until the end of time. Then everyone will be subjected to Christ, and "the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:25-28).

[75] Christ's work is of infinite merit. No football score (or any other analogy from creation) can accurately represent the merit of Christ's sacrifice. When I use a ridiculously high score that few teams have ever achieved, it is just an illustration to help make the point.

[76] If the final play didn't happen at the last minute on the one-yard line, the victory would not have been so astonishing. If the coach didn't select the best play to the best receiver, the worst player would not be in position to intercept the ball and they would not have scored the winning touchdown. If he didn't catch the ball, the same would result., etc.. Each step, although minor in itself, contributed to the final victory.

[77] "How, too, could He have subdued him who was stronger than men, who had not only overcome man, but also retained him under his power, and conquered him who had conquered, while he set free mankind who had been conquered, unless He had been greater than man who had thus been vanquished? But who else is superior to, and more eminent than, that man who was formed after the likeness of God, except the Son of God, after whose image man was created? And for this reason He did in these last days exhibit the similitude; [for] the Son of God was made man, assuming the ancient production [of His hands] into His own nature, as I have shown in the immediately preceding book" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4,33,4).

The spoils of the "strong man's" house are all those who were or are in a "state of apostasy" and sin (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3, 8, 2 and 5, 21, 3).

"But inasmuch as God is invincible and long-suffering, He did indeed show Himself to be long-suffering in the matter of the correction of man and the probation of all, as I have already observed; and by means of the second man did He bind the strong man, and spoiled his goods, and abolished death, vivifying that man who had been in a state of death. For at the first Adam became a vessel in his [Satan's] possession, whom he did also hold under his power, that is, by bringing sin on him iniquitously, and under colour of immortality entailing death upon him. For, while promising that they should be as gods, which was in no way possible for him to be, he wrought death in them: wherefore he who had led man captive, was justly captured in his turn by God; but man, who had been led captive, was loosed from the bonds of condemnation." (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3, 23, 1).

[78] See Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.; New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989), 1:56.

[79] Although speaking about Christ's Redemption being applied in our lives, Paul makes a similar point in Romans 6:12-14. By grace the parts of our body can be transformed from weapons of unrighteousness to weapons of righteousness. Some translations translate "weapons" (Greek, *hoplon*) as "instruments," but New Testament and early Christian literature almost always uses this word as weapons. See *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin.; ed. Gerhard Kittel et al.;, electronic ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976), 5:294.

[80] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 12, 15.

[81] Ambrose, *Explanatio in Psalm. 37*, n. 8-9, as cited in Unger, p. 169 (Emphasis mine). Migne, P.L., 14, 1012D.

[82] Robert Jamieson et al., *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (On spine: *Critical and explanatory commentary.*; Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), Lk 11:22 (Emphasis his).

[83] Justin Martyr (d. 165), *Dialogue with Trypho*, 100; Migne, P.G., 6, 709-711A. Emphasis mine.

[84] Irenaeus, *Against All Heresies*, 5, 21, 1, Migne, P.G., 7, 1179.

[85] Irenaeus, *Against All Heresies*, 5, 19, 1, Migne, P.G., 7, 1175. Both the Schaff and Donaldson edition of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* include the typo "the coming of the serpent," which should read "the cunning of the Serpent."

[86] Irenaeus, *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*, 31.

[87] Irenaeus, *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*, 33.

[88] Tertullian, *Concerning the Flesh of Christ*, 17; Migne, P.L., 2, 782.

[89] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 12, 15.

[90] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo de Annunciatione Deiparae*, 14, Migne P.G., 28, 937B, as cited in Unger, p. 110. Works like Pseudo-Athanasius, whose authorship is doubted, are cited as witnesses to the belief during a given time period, not because of the authority of their supposed authors.

[91] Basil the Great (d. 379), *Quod Deus non est auctor malorum*, 8-9, as cited in Unger, p. 111, Emphasis mine.

[92] Pseudo-Gregory the Wonderworker, *Homily 3 on the Annunciation*, Migne, P.G., 10, 1177A. Emphasis mine.

[93] John Chrysostom, *In Sanctum Pascha*, 2; Migne, P.G., 52, 767D-768A, as cited in Unger, p. 122. Emphasis mine.

[94] John Chrysostom, *Sermon 5, On Genesis 2-3*; Migne, P.G., 54, 602, as cited in Unger, p.124. Emphasis mine.

- [95] Aphraates (d. 367), *Demonstrations* 6, 6. Emphasis mine.
- [96] Epiphanius, *Panarion*, VII, Heresy 58, 9,1; Frank Williams trans. p. 628.
- [97] *ibid.*
- [98] Ephrem of Syria (d. 373), *Hymni* 5, 3rd Cycle; Lamy, 3, 980, as cited in Unger, p. 144.
- [99] Ambrose (d. 397), *De obitu Theodosii*, 44, 47; Migne, P.L., 16, 1400-1401, as cited in Unger, p. 171.
- [100] Ambrose, *On the Sacraments*, Book 2, 6, 17.
- [101] Amphilocheus of Iconium, (d. 394), *In natalitia Domini (orat. 1)*, 105.
- [102] Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444), *Glaphyra in Genesim*, 1, 5; Migne, P.G., 69, 28C–29D, as cited in Unger, p. 127.
- [103] Leo the Great (d. 461), *Sermon 22, On the Feast of the Nativity*, 2, 3.
- [104] Theodotus of Ancyra (d. 446), *In sanctam Dei Genitricem*, 11-12; Migne, P.G., 77, 1427-1428B, as cited in Unger, p. 131.
- [105] Eusebius of Alexandria (d. 444/451), *Sermon 3*, Migne, P.G., 86, 329D, as cited in Unger, p. 130.
- [106] Basil of Seleucia (d. 459), *Oration 3, In Adamum*, 3-4; Migne, P.G., 85, 61 A B, as cited in Unger, p. 135.
- [107] Chrysippus of Jerusalem, *Oratio in Sanctam Mariam Deiparam*, 3, *Homélie mariales byzantines II* [Patrologia orientalis], 19, 336-34, as cited in Unger, p. 136.
- [108] Hesychius of Jerusalem (d. after 450), *De Sancta Maria Deipara (Sermo 5)*; Migne, P.G., 93, 1466A, as cited in Unger, p. 132.
- [109] Pseudo-Gregory the Wonderworker (*Thaumaturgus*) (d. 270/275), *Homily 3, On the Annunciation to the Holy Virgin Mary*, Migne, P.G., 10, 1148.
- [110] Augustine (d. 430), *On the Christian Combat (De Agone Christiano)*, 22, 24; Migne, P.L., 40, 303, as cited in Unger, p. 192.
- [111] Pseudo-Augustine, *De Symbolo*, *serm. Ad catechumenos*, 4, Migne, P.L., 40, 655, as cited in Unger, p. 195.
- [112] Peter Chrysologus (d. ca. 450), *Sermon 142, De annunciatione Dominae Mariae Virginis*; Migne, P.L. 52 579B, as cited in Unger, p. 199.
- [113] Eleutherius of Tournay (d. 531), *Sermo de Natalitia Domini*, Migne, P.L., 65, 94C, as cited in Unger, p. 204.
- [114] The early Church often used the analogy of untying a knotted rope. The Devil had bound the human race as one would tie a rope into a knot. God frees us by untying the Devil's knot. How is a knot untied? The same twists and turns that made the knot have to be loosened in reverse. God, in the same way, untied the knot of the Fall, as we shall soon see, in reverse.
- [115] Typology is the study of persons, places, things, or events that occurred in an earlier period in Scripture that foreshadow a future person, place, thing or event later. The thing that foreshadows is called a "type." The type's fulfillment or parallel is called an "antitype." It would be probably fair to say that most modern Christians shy away from the practice of typology because it tends to be abused by people who force these correspondences into the text.
- [116] Unfortunately, God's perfect plan of redemption so closely mirrors the events of the Fall that it appears to some to be mere typology. Jesus is the New Adam and Mary is the New Eve. That's true! But what does this mean? Why is it necessary? What does this tell us about God and how He has saved and redeemed us? If we reduce redemption only to typology, then we reduce God's plan of redemption from something monumental merely to biblical factoids.
- [117] Augustine, *On the Christian Combat (De Agone Christiano)*, 22, 24; Migne, P.L., 40, 303, as cited in Unger p. 192.
- [118] Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, 17, Emphasis mine.
- [119] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5,21,1. The translation above is weak. The first line is, "Neque enim juste

victus fuisset inimicus, nisi ex muliere homo esset, qui vicit eum.” (Migne, P.G., 7b, 1179). Unger translates it as, “For the enemy would not have been justly conquered unless a man born of a woman had conquered him.” Unger continues, “For through a woman he got dominion over man in the beginning, setting himself up in opposition to man.” Unger, p. 98.

[120] Severianus of Syria (d. after 408), *Creation of the World*, orat. 6, 10, Migne, P.G., 56, 4 95-496, as cited in Unger, pp. 119-120.

[121] Atticus of Constantinople (d. 425), *Homily*, Museon, 46 (1933), 167, as quoted in Unger, p. 126.

[122] Ephrem of Syria, *Homily Concerning the Blessed Virgin*, 2, vss. 7-10, 12, Lamy, *Hymni et sermones*, 2, 45, as cited in Unger, p. 144.

[123] Fulgentius (d. 533), *Sermon 123*, Migne, P.L., 39, 1192, as cited in Unger p.207.

[124] “...Eve, though she had Adam as husband, while still a virgin... [she] was disobedient, and became the cause of death for herself and the entire human race. In the same way, Mary in turn, though she had a husband who had been ordained beforehand, while she was still a virgin, was obedient, and was made the cause of salvation for herself and the entire human race” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3, 22, 4). “Sin began from the woman and then spread to the man. In the same way, salvation had its beginnings from women...” (Origen, *Homilies in Luke*, 8).

“Through Eve yet virgin came death; through a virgin, or rather from a virgin, must the Life appear: that as the serpent beguiled the one, so to the other Gabriel might bring good tidings” (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 12, 14).

[125] “For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her: wherefore also the Holy Thing begotten of her is the Son of God; and she replied, ‘Be it unto me according to your word...’” (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 100).

[126] “...that deception being done away with, by which the virgin Eve, who was already espoused to a man, was unhappily misled—was happily announced, through means of the truth [spoken] by the angel to the Virgin Mary, who was [also espoused] to a man. For just as the former was led astray by the word of an angel, so that she fled from God when she had transgressed His word; so did the latter, by an angelic communication, receive the glad tidings that she should sustain (portaret) God, being obedient to His word. And if the former did disobey God, yet the latter was persuaded to be obedient to God, in order that the Virgin Mary might become the patroness (advocata) of the virgin Eve.” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5, 19, 1).

“Through Eve yet virgin came death; through a virgin, or rather from a virgin, must the Life appear: that as the serpent beguiled the one, so to the other Gabriel might bring good tidings.” (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture*, 12, 15).

[127] “The Serpent made of old a pact with Eve. She was his friend and the Serpent the woman’s. But God, being good, took care that this pact should be dissolved, and this evil friendship destroyed...” (Origen, *Homilies in Jeremiah*, 19, 7, Migne, P.G., 13, 516D-517A, as cited in Unger, p.105).

[128] “...[F]or it was necessary Adam should be summed up in Christ, that mortality might be swallowed up and overwhelmed by immortality; and Eve summed up in Mary, that a virgin should be a virgin’s intercessor (advocate),

and by a virgin's obedience undo and put away the disobedience of a virgin." (Irenaeus, The Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching, 33 St. Irenaeus, Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching, trans. J. A. Robinson (London: S.P.C.K., 1920), p. 100.)

"...And even as she [Eve], having indeed a husband, Adam, but being nevertheless as yet a virgin...having become disobedient, was made the cause of death, both to herself and to the entire human race; so also did Mary, having a man betrothed [to her], and being nevertheless a virgin, by yielding obedience, become the cause of salvation, both to herself and the whole human race" (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3,22,4.)

"And if the former did disobey God, yet the latter was persuaded to be obedient to God, in order that the Virgin Mary might become the patroness (advocata) of the virgin Eve" (Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 5, 19, 1).

"In the beginning, the Serpent, having captivated the ears of Eve, spread poison into the whole body; today Mary receives by means of the ears, the advocate of perpetual happiness. So (woman) who has the instrument of death was also the instrument of life" (Ephrem of Syria, De diversis, sermo 3, Assemani, Syr. Lat. (Rome, 1740), 3, 607, as cited in Unger, p. 143).

"Does he [The Devil] not ask repeatedly: 'How does it happen that the instrument which aided me in the beginning is now my enemy? Woman cooperated with me to obtain tyrannical power over the human race...' (Chrysippus of Jerusalem, Oratio in Sanctam Mariam Deiparam, 3).

[\[129\]](#) Protestants do not hold Sirach to be an inspired canonical work. Nevertheless, Sirach was part of the Greek Septuagint (the de facto Old Testament of Jesus and His Apostles) and it reflects Jewish beliefs just prior to the time of Christ.

[\[130\]](#) "And the Lord summed up in Himself this enmity, when He was made man from a woman, and trod upon his [the serpent's] head." (Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 4, 40, 3).

"Really, from her flesh and from her bone, and from the old Adam, the New Adam, by opposition, fashioned for Himself the Incarnation, as a rib, which He bears forever. And so, the New Eve, called the 'Mother of all the living' remains clothed and wrapped in embroidered garment in order to be first fruit of immortal life for all the living" (Pseudo-Athanasius, Sermo de Annunciatione Deiparae, 14, Migne, P.G., 28, 937, as cited in Unger, p.110).

"Is Eve then born out of a man's side without a mother, and is a child not to be born without a father, of a virgin's womb? This debt of gratitude was due to men from womankind: for Eve was begotten of Adam, and not conceived of a mother, but as it were brought forth of man alone. Mary, therefore, paid the debt of gratitude, when not by man but of herself alone in an immaculate way she conceived of the Holy Ghost by the power of God" (Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, 12, 29).

"The world which previously had fallen under sin by a virgin, was set free by a virgin. By a virginal birth so many and so great forces of invisible demons were precipitated into hell" (Amphilochius, Orationes et homiliae, 4, In Christi Natalem, Migne, P.G., 39, 40-41, as cited in Unger, p.114).

[\[131\]](#) Applying Psalms 40:6-8 LXX to Christ's incarnation. Emphasis mine.

[132] On another level, we find God, once again, repeating how it was in the beginning. The first woman received the totality of her human nature from the side of Adam (Genesis 2:21-22). In the Redemption, Christ inherits the totality of human nature from his mother, Mary (Galatians 4:4, cf. 1 Corinthians 11:7-12).

[133] Proclus of Constantinople (d. 446/447), *Oratio I, Laudatio Dei Genitricis Mariae*.

[134] Peter Chrysologus, *Sermon 64*, Migne, P.L., 52, 380.

[135] Hebrews 2:10-11, 14-15. Emphasis NASB – The NASB adds the word “Father” to Hebrews 2:11. The Greek says the one Who is sanctifying and those who are being sanctified are “all of one” (See ASV, KJV, NKJV).

[136] For the sake of simplicity, we will skip over any discussion of our first parents’ “pre-Fall” abilities and their loss.

[137] “And so, the New Eve, called the ‘Mother of all the living,’ remains clothed and wrapped in embroidered garment in order to be the first fruit of immortal life for all the living” (Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo de Annunciatione Deiparae*, 14, Migne, P.G., 28, 937b, as cited in Unger, p.110).

[138] See Augustine’s *On the Trinity*, 11, 11, 16. Ambrose saw the garments as penitential garb (see *Two Books Concerning Penance*, 2, 11, 99).

[139] “...For it was by means of a woman that he got the advantage over man at first, setting himself up as man’s opponent. And therefore does the Lord profess Himself to be the Son of man, comprising in Himself that original man out of whom the woman was fashioned, in order that, as our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one; and as through a man death received the palm [of victory] against us, so again by a man we may receive the palm against death” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5, 21, 1).

“On account of the words of Eve, Adam was cast from paradise. But the Word, born of the Virgin, revealed the cross whereby the thief entered the paradise of Adam” (Pseudo-Gregory the Wonderworker, *Sermo de Nativitate Christi*, 23, as cited in Unger, p. 109).

[140] Genesis 3:22-23 (Emphasis mine).

[141] This distinction between the Ascension and the Assumption is also recognized in Roman Catholic teaching. See CCC 966 and 2853, *Lumen Gentium* 59; cf. Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950): DS 3903.

[142] Corruption is also a sign of the Devil’s dominion over man since the dust that God command man to return to (Genesis 3:19) is that which the Serpent is to eat (Genesis 3:14).

[143] Within Catholic theology, some uncertainty exists as to whether Mary was assumed into heaven before or after death. The definition of the Assumption deliberately did not address this point. Scripture gives at least two examples of people who never tasted death, Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11). See Chapter 10 for more detail.

[144] “This fact is exhibited in a still clearer light in the same Epistle, where he [the Apostle] thus speaks: “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman” (Galatians 4:4). For indeed the enemy would not have been fairly vanquished, unless it had been a man [born] of a woman who conquered him. For it was by means of a woman that he got the advantage over man at first, setting himself up as man’s opponent. And therefore does the Lord profess Himself to be the Son of man, comprising in Himself that original man out of whom the woman was fashioned (*ex quo ea quæ secundum mulierem est plasmatio facta est*), in order that, as our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one;” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5, 21, 1).

“For thou hast become to women the beginning of the new creation. Thou hast given to us boldness of access into paradise, and thou hast put to flight our ancient woe. For after thee the race of woman shall no more be made the subject of reproach. No more do the successors of Eve fear the ancient curse, or the pangs of childbirth. For Christ, the Redeemer of our race, the Saviour of all nature, the spiritual Adam who has healed the hurt of the creature of

earth, cometh forth from thy holy womb" (Pseudo-Gregory the Wonderworker, Homily 4, Discourse 2).

"The world which previously had fallen under sin by a virgin, was set free by a virgin. By a virginal birth so many and so great forces of invisible demons were precipitated into Hell" Amphilochius of Iconium (d. after 349), *Orationes et homiliae*, 4, *In diem Natalem Christi*, Migne, P.G., 39, 40-41, as cited in Unger, p. 114.

"And just as the human race was put in chains by a virgin, so by the Virgin was it saved. The disobedience of a Virgin was balanced by the obedience of the Virgin. Moreover, the sin of the first parent (Adam) was set right by the correction of the Firstborn, and the cunning of the Serpent was overcome with the simplicity of the dove, and the chains by which we were bound to death have been broken" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5, 19,1).

[145] The Jews shortly before the time of Christ understood that God's original design was for man to live forever. It was because of the Devil that death entered into the world. See *Wisdom* 2:23-24.

[146] "...the Son of the Most High God the Father of all, who effected the incarnation of this being, and showed forth a new [kind of] generation; that as by the former generation we inherited death, so by this new generation we might inherit life." (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5, 1, 3).

[147] Other Bible passages also teach this. 1 Peter 3:20-21, "...when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Titus 3:5, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."

[148] Ephrem of Syria, *Sermon on Our Lord*, 3.

[149] This is implied in *Genesis* 3:17, where God told Adam, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree."

[150] The Hebrew 'ashith is a *qal*, active, imperfect verb which can have a future or a continued-present meaning. The Greek Septuagint is less ambiguous translating this verb as a future active indicative. The Latin Vulgate, the Old Latin, and the Syriac Peshitto, and nearly all major English translations (e.g. A.S.V., E.S.V., K.J.V., N.A.S.B., N.I.V., R.S.V., N.R.S.V., et al.) also translate this verb in the future tense.

[151] The Hebrew word translated as "enmity" ('*ayab*) and the corresponding Greek word in the Septuagint (*echthra*) denote hostility or warfare (see *Exodus* 23:22, *Numbers* 35:21-22, et al.).

[152] "Let us then hear how God puts enmity against him (the Serpent), so as to bring about friendship with Christ. For it cannot be that one should be at the same time a friend of those who are mutually opposed. And as no one can serve two masters, so no one can be a friend of God and of mammon, a friend of Christ and of the Serpent. But it must needs be that the friendship of Christ should generate enmities against the Serpent, and the friendship of the Serpent bring both enmities against Christ" (Origen, *Homilies in Jeremiah*, 19, 7, Migne, P.G., 13, 516D-517A, as cited in Unger, p.105).

[153] *James* 2:23 links righteousness with friendship with God.

[154] The early Christians likewise affirmed this identification, although there were a variety of opinions as to the relationship between the Serpent and the Devil.

[155] If it were Adam, that fact would also rule out Eve's being the Woman, since Adam is not Eve's seed.

[156] As found in the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT), the Greek Septuagint (LXX), Peshitto, Old Latin, Targum Onkelos, et al. Most English translations render the Woman's Seed as "he" will strike your head. Some manuscripts have a neuter pronoun "it" or the feminine pronoun "she," as is the case with most manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate and the Sixto-Clementine edition approved by Pope Clement VIII in 1592. The 1979 Nova Vulgata has the pronoun "*ipsum*" (it) instead of "*ipsa*" (she). We should note that although the feminine pronoun may not be part of the inspired text, it still has an important theological application to *Genesis* 3:15, which we will explore later.

[157] See James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.; Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), DBLH 8789, #1.

[158] Scripture has several examples of the lethality of a blow to the head. The Canaanite leader Sisera was killed by Jael, who drove a tent peg into his head (Judges 5:26). Abimelech was also mortally wounded by a millstone that struck his head (Judges 9:53). David likewise killed Goliath by slinging a stone at his head (1 Samuel 17:49-50).

[159] A fascinating example to the contrary is found in Exodus where God commanded Moses to pick up the snake (that was earlier his staff) by its tail, not its head (Exodus 4:3-4).

[160] Indeed, even the place where Jesus was crucified, Golgotha or the “place of the skull” (Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22, Luke 23:33, John 19:17) evokes the image of Genesis 3:15.

[161] Out of the 248 instances of sperma in the Greek Septuagint (LXX), and 230 instances of the Hebrew word zera in the Masoretic Text (MT), only a few instances exist where “seed” is associated with a woman or women (Genesis 4:25, 16:10, 24:60, Leviticus 22:13, Numbers 5:28, 1 Samuel 1:11, 2:20), besides a few metaphorical uses (e.g., Isaiah 57:3). These instances speak to women about “your seed” (zar’ech) or women possibly conceiving or not conceiving (zera). But nowhere in the Old Testament, outside Genesis 3:15, is there an instance where “her seed” (zar’ah / spermatos autes) refer to a single individual or child. This shows a unique and exclusive relationship exists between the male and his mother, as if he had no earthly father (i.e., the Virgin Birth).

[162] Emphasis mine.

[163] Emphasis mine. The meaning of this passage is cryptic. However, when all the possible meanings are compared the most plausible understanding is that of the Virgin Birth. The Protestant Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown does an excellent job arguing that, in lieu of better interpretations, the “woman encompassing a man” best suits the Virgin Birth of Christ (see Appendix 3).

[164] Isaiah 7:14 (emphasis mine).

[165] The Greek, “egenomenon ek gunaikos,” literally reads, “He who was made out of woman.”

[166] See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5, 21, 1; Serapion, *Catena in Genesim*, Pseudo-Jerome, *Ad Amicum Aegrotum*, 6; Leo the Great, *Sermon* 22, 2, 1; Isidore of Seville, *Quaestiones in Genesim*, 5, 5-6; Ildephonse, *De Cognitione Baptismi*, and others.

[167] See Genesis 49:17, Job 18:9.

[168] The Greek literally reads, “...out of your father the devil”

[169] Ephesians 5:23, 30, Colossians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, and others.

[170] There are many differing theological opinions regarding the Elect and divine election. For our purposes we will use the term Elect to be those people chosen by God for glory.

[171] For an excellent explanation of why Genesis 3:15 makes up a prophetic segment, see Unger, 244-251.

[172] Eve may have hoped that the birth of Cain was the fulfillment of the First Gospel when she said: “I have gotten a man-child with the help of the LORD” (Genesis 4:1). Eve would soon learn that this was a mistake.

[173] Genesis 4:1-2, 25. 5:1-4. Epiphanius wrote: “Physically speaking, every human being in the world is born of that Eve but here life itself has truly been born into the world of Mary, so that Mary brings forth the Living One [Christ] and becomes the mother of the Living [Christians]. Mary then, was called the ‘mother of the living’ in a riddle [or figure]” (Epiphanius, *Panarion*, Book 3, Heresy 78, 18).

[174] Compare Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew’s application in Matthew 1:20-23. Likewise, Micah 5:2-3, perhaps Jeremiah 31:22, and Ezekiel 44:2.

[175] Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:2-3, Jeremiah 31:22, and others. We will examine these texts in more detail next chapter.

[176] The Greek word translated “full of grace” or “highly favored” is *kecharitomene*. The root of this word is *charitoō* which means “to make someone or something acceptable, graced, or favored.” The word itself is a perfect passive participle, which indicates that Mary was in the state of God’s grace or favor sometime before the angel appeared to her and that she currently stands in that state. Luke 1:30 likewise Mary has been found (*aorist active indicative*) in grace or favor with God.

[177] Also in Matthew 15:28, Luke 13:12; Peter in Luke 22:57 and the angels in John 20:13.

[178] “...it was completely unheard of for a son to address his mother in such a fashion” (*Italics mine*). Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., & Murphy, R. E. (1968). *The Jerome Biblical commentary* (Jn 2:4). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. The text refers the reader to J. Michl’s article in *Biblica* 36 [1955] 492-509.

[179] See, the *Kitab al-Magall*, the Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan, the Cave of Treasures, and Eutychius of Alexandria.

[180] Greek uses the word “made” (*ginomai*) instead of born. Paul’s quote from Genesis 2:7 LXX also uses the same word.

[181] Unger breaks down the Eastern and Western writers’ interpretation of Genesis 3:15 as follows: Those who openly held Mary is the Woman: Irenaeus, Serapion, Pseudo-Chrysostom, Epiphanius, Chrysippus, John the Metropolitan, Joseph the Hymnographer, Ephrem, Jacobus Sarugensis, Cyprian, Ambrose, Pseudo-Jerome, Prudentius, Leo the Great, Isidore of Seville, Pseudo-Eucherius, Ildephonse, Fulbert, Rupert, and Bernard (and possibly Jerome). Those who held Christ as the Seed and implicitly held Mary as the Woman: Justin, Isidore of Pelusium, Hippolytus, and perhaps Theophilus, Hesychius, Claudius M. Victor, Avitus. Those who allude to Genesis 3:15 in their Mary / Eve opposition, *Epistola ad Diognetum*, Theophilus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Proclus, Eusebius of Alexandria, Antipater(?), Basil of Seleucia, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Pseudo-Tertullian in *Carmen adversus Marcionem*, Ambrose, and Eleutherius. Only three authors in Unger’s survey seem to have held Eve as the Woman: Origen, Augustine, and Procopius. None of these fathers, however, argued for Eve exclusively since they elsewhere identify Mary as the Woman. See Unger, p. 223-225.

[182] E.g., Damascene and Augustine, *Opus Imperfectum in Matthaeum*. See Unger, p. 226.

[183] This is true for the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT), the Greek Septuagint (LXX), the Old Latin, the Latin Vulgate, and the Syriac Peshitto, and even the Targum Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan.

[184] The early Christian writers expressed this union in different ways. For example, Melito of Sardis (ca. AD 170) wrote, “This is the one who became human in a virgin...This is the lamb that was slain. This is the lamb that was silent. This is the one who was born of Mary, that beautiful ewe-lamb” (Pascal Homily, 70-71). Jesus is the lamb from the “beautiful ewe-lamb.”

[185] Christ is true God and true man. He possesses both a divine and human will that are never opposed to each other. (See Luke 22:42, Hebrews 4:15; also, Constantinople III (681), and CCC 475).

[186] God’s special intervention (creating Mary in friendship and favor with God and at enmity with the Devil) is what Roman Catholics call the Immaculate Conception. The definition of this belief reads: “...We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful” (*The Definition of the Immaculate Conception of Mary* (*Ineffabilis Deus*), 8 December, 1854, DS 2804).

[187] Mary was created innocent of sin just as Eve was, only she continued in obedience while Eve was, led astray, lost her righteousness, and brought about the fall of Adam and all of humanity. See Appendix 4 - Making Sense of Mary: Virgin in Body and Spirit.

[188] For example, God commands Adam and his wife to fill the earth and have dominion over it (Genesis 1:28). Psalm 8 describes Adam as being crowned and ruling over the works of God’s hands. The metaphor of eating or licking dust is applied elsewhere for the subjugation of God’s enemies (Isaiah 49:23, Psalm 72:9-11, Micah 7:17) and trampling another under one’s feet refers to achieving dominion over his enemies, especially in reference to the Davidic monarchy (Psalm 8:6, 18:38, 43:3, etc.)

[189] This is fulfilled in Christ who will reign until, “...all rule and authority and power and dominion” are placed under His feet (Ephesians 1:20-23, 1 Corinthians 15:25-28, Hebrews 2:6-10).

[\[190\]](#) *Isaiah 7:13-14.*

[\[191\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[192\]](#) *For example, Jerome, Letter 22, 19, Ambrose, Three Books on the Holy Spirit, 2, 5, 38, Apostolic Constitutions, 6, 3, 11, and Leo the Great, Sermon 24 [IV], 1. Also possibly, Justin Martyr, First Apology, 32; Tertullian, Reply to Marcion, 4, 235, Novatian, Concerning the Trinity, 9. Other early Christian writers understood both the rod and flower to refer to Christ.*

[\[193\]](#) *Micah 5:1-3 [2-4] (Emphasis added)*

[\[194\]](#) *Micah 5 is also quoted to the Magi in Matthew 2:5-6.*

[\[195\]](#) *Possible interpretations of Jeremiah 31:22 are given in Appendix 3.*

[\[196\]](#) *The Aquila text is a Jewish translation of the Hebrew Old Testament that dates from around the middle of the second century AD. See Athanasius' Statement of Faith, Article 3.*

[\[197\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[198\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[199\]](#) *Isaiah 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12.*

[\[200\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[201\]](#) *Luke 1:46-49, 52, 54-55.*

[\[202\]](#) *Philippians 2:7-9.*

[\[203\]](#) *Luke 1:38, 48.*

[\[204\]](#) *Monarchies existed in ancient Persia, Babylonia, Assyria, Media, and elsewhere both in the ancient middle-east and Asia.*

[\[205\]](#) *Here we are speaking only of the kingdom's general structure. The Jews and even Christ's disciples believed the messianic kingdom was to be a geo-political entity, where the kingdom adopted many features of the Davidic kingdom and yet went considerably beyond it.*

[\[206\]](#) *Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions, (Darton, Longman and Todd: London, 1965), p. 117.*

[\[207\]](#) *See Song of Songs 6:8 and 9. Outside of the Davidic monarchy, Scripture speaks of the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1, 4, 10, 13, and 2 Chronicles 9:1, 3, 9, 12), Vashti, and Esther, as queens as well.*

[\[208\]](#) *The latter is implied in 2 Chronicles 11:21-22, See de Vaux, p. 118.*

[\[209\]](#) *Since King Saul did not have a lineal successor, the office of Queen Mother was not established until David's son and successor Solomon inherited the throne.*

[\[210\]](#) *Maacah retained her office even after the death of her son King Abijam. She was also formally removed from her office under Asa (1 Kings 15:13).*

[\[211\]](#) *Emphasis mine. The Queen Mother is once again repeated in 2 Kings 24:15.*

[\[212\]](#) *Luke 1:30-33 has several points of contact with the virgin prophecy of Isaiah 7:13-14. Both passages speak of virgins who will "conceive" and "bear" a son. The son would be from the "house of David / throne of David." Both passages speak of the child being named "Immanuel" and "Jesus." Immanuel means "God with us" and the angel tells Mary that "the Lord is with you." From these points and others, it appears that Luke is trying to link the Virgin Mary with the virgin prophesied in Isaiah 7:13-14.*

[\[213\]](#) *John Damascene also wrote, "Assuredly she who played the part of the Creator's servant and mother is in all strictness and truth in reality God's Mother and Lady and Queen over all created things" (The Orthodox Faith, 4, 14). If Mary is "God's Mother" because she gave birth to God then she is also the "Lady and Queen over all created things" because she gave birth to Christ who is King over all created things. "Lady and Queen" in this context suggests that Mary is Christ's Queen mother.*

- [214] The Hebrew word *shachah* translated “homage” means to bow down or prostrate oneself.
- [215] See William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, *Context of Scripture* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 92.
- [216] Outside of political expediency, all Jews, including the king, were bound to honor their father and mother (Exodus 20:12, Matthew 15:4, Ephesians 6:1-3).
- [217] Apologists often use the Adonijah affair as a proof against the intercessory power of the Queen Mother. Adonijah’s actions presuppose that the Queen Mother does possess this powerful intercessory function.
- [218] But Robert Jamieson’s *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (On spine: *Critical and explanatory commentary.*; Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), Jeremiah 13:20, notes that the Hebrew uses “a noun of multitude, which accounts for the blending of plural and singular.” For this reason, the commentator suggests that Jerusalem, not the King and Queen Mother, is the one being addressed. The Septuagint (LXX) also mentions Jerusalem as the passage’s intended audience. However, the people of Jerusalem is the flock mentioned in the passage. This interpretation would make God entrust the flock to the flock, which is nonsense. The Septuagint must be using Jerusalem as a synecdoche for its leaders who once resided in that city, just as we speak of “Washington” today when we refer to the leaders of our government.
- [219] “And He [God] fulfilled the promise to David; for to him God promised that ‘of the fruit of his body’ He would raise up an eternal King, whose kingdom should have no end. And this King is Christ... who became the fruit of that Virgin who had her descent from David... that He might declare the peculiar uniqueness of Him, who was the fruit of the virgin body that was of David, (even of Him) who was King over the house of David, (and) of whose kingdom there shall be no end” (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*, 36).
- [220] The silence of a Queen Mother for Jehoram and Ahaz may be due to their co-regency with their father. The same Queen Mother, therefore, would have remained in office for both father and son.
- [221] To this we can add that the Magi came in search of the newborn “King of the Jews” (Matthew 1:1-2). Upon their arrival, they found “the Child with Mary his mother” (Matthew 2:11). Joseph is not mentioned although he undoubtedly was there. Matthew may be evoking the image of the Queen Mother with the King of Israel.
- [222] The installation of Mary as Queen Mother parallels what we have seen in God’s perfect plan of redemption where the New Adam repairs Adam’s exile by ascending to Paradise in heaven where the true Tree of Life resides, taking with Him the New Eve, who had also been exiled.
- [223] Mary links Christ to the line of David in two ways. First, through her marriage to Joseph who in both genealogies of Jesus is traced back to David (Matthew 1:1-18, Luke 3:23-38). Second, Mary herself may have been Davidic as well, since it was customary to marry within one’s own tribe (Numbers 36:6-7) and the early Christian writers commonly believed Mary to be from the family of David.
- [224] Epiphanius was arguing against those who wished reinterpret Mary in terms of their own sensuality. He admonishes them not to do it since the honor or dishonor given to Mary redounds to Our Lord, Panarion, Heresy 78, 21,5.
- [225] For a fuller explanation see the concluding section of Chapter 10 subtitled, *Why do the Saints in Heaven Pray for Us?*
- [226] Gregory Nazianzus, *Poemata dogmatica*, Section 1, 58, Migne, P.G., 37, 485.
- [227] Also Acts 26:14-15.
- [228] Emphasis mine.
- [229] Emphasis mine.
- [230] Augustine, *City of God*, 17, 18 (Emphasis mine).
- [231] We will forego discussing how Paul came to this distinction since our focus is on the fact that the inspired author made this distinction.
- [232] Galatians 3:27-29. The Greek word translated offspring is *sperma*, which is the nominative singular of Seed. Emphasis mine.
- [233] Augustine, *Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament*, Sermon 94 [144], 5 [4].
- [234] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book 3, 31, 44. This is the first of the seven Rules of Tichonius, which Augustine commends to the studios, albeit with caution, since its author had Donatist tendencies. Unlike Rule 3,

Augustine commends the quoted passage without reservation.

[235] Another way to look at this is in terms of Redemption accomplished and applied. Christ accomplished our Redemption. Therefore, He is the primary fulfillment. Christ Redemption is being applied in history through the Church. Therefore, the Church crushes Satan by Christ's grace. Therefore, the Church is the secondary fulfillment.

[236] In the beginning the ancient serpent (Devil or Satan) caused Adam to be cast out of heaven. Luke depicts the reverse. The New Adam (and His Body the Church) causes Satan to fall from heaven and Christ (both Head and Body) have the authority to "tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy." Dominion is restored.

[237] Isaiah 66:7-10 New American Bible. Emphasis mine.

[238] New Jerusalem Bible.

[239] The Greek verb, translated "pondered" (Greek, *diologizeto*) implies intense, prolonged reflection. See Raymond Edward Brown et al., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968), Lk 1:29.

[240] In Genesis 3:16 LXX, God increases the grief or sorrow (Greek, *lupe*) of childbirth.

[241] For further development of this theme see Appendix 4 - Making Sense of Mary: Virgin in Body and Spirit.

[242] Gregory of Nyssa, In *Canticum Canticorum*, 13, Migne, P.G., 44, 1053B, as quoted in Unger, p. 114.

[243] The exemption from the pain of childbirth echoes what Ephrem of Syria and Theodotus of Ancyra had wrote concerning Mary. "... [T]here is no guilt in you, Lord, nor any stain in your Mother...Adam did not procreate you, who dared to transgress the law..." Mary was "included in woman's sex, was free from woman's sin, a virgin innocent, without taint, holy in soul and body, as a lily budding in the midst of thorns, unlearned in the evils of Eve... [W]ho was a daughter of Adam, but unlike him."

[244] New American Bible.

[245] *Our Father, Our Mother: Mary and the Faces of God*, George T. Montague, S.M., Franciscan University Press (1990), p. 107.

[246] Zechariah uses the Greek word *euphrainou not chaire* as in Luke 1:28.

[247] International Standard Version.

[248] Emphasis mine.

[249] Revelation 12 also omits several important elements as well, such as Adam, Paradise, the beasts of the field and sea, night, and perhaps others as well.

[250] The focus is on the constellation Virgo (the Virgin) and Scorpio (the Dragon) and the passing of the planets through Virgo symbolizing a birth of a King. A good discussion of this interpretation can be found in David Chilton's book, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition on the Book of Revelation* (Dominion Press, Tyler Texas), p. 301-303. Even this astrological interpretation points to Mary since the "Woman" would be the constellation Virgo (the Virgin), who is giving birth.

[251] The Hebrew word *kannidgalot* means "bannered armies." It can have a metaphorical application to the heavenly armies. Given that the moon and sun are mentioned immediately before the "bannered armies," it is possible to see these "bannered armies" as the procession of stars (compare NIV and the NET) or more ambiguous, "bannered hosts" (TANAKH).

[252] Some early Christian writers understood this passage to be an allegorical description of the Virgin Mary (for example, Ambrose, *Exposition of Luke*, 2, 7; Gregory of Nyssa, *On Song of Songs*, 13).

[253] Also, the Devil is also at war with "Her Seed," meaning all Christians (Revelation 12:17).

[254] "[Speaking in the person of the devil] 'What then? Shall we desist from ambushes because she [Mary] has become worthy to be made the great custody? Must we recede from the natural enmity because she is protected by the heavenly help...Is not a new battle imminent with the Second Eve? Must we rage our armies against the immaculate woman?' (Proclus, *Orat.* 6, 16, Migne, P.G., 65, 752A, as quoted in Unger, p. 129).

[255] By calling Christians the rest of “her seed” (Revelation 12:17) implies that the male-child is also “Her Seed” as well. Only the Woman “brought forth” the male-child (Christ) physically, while Revelation does not explicitly state where the other offspring came about.

[256] Although the word sign is used seven times in chapters 12-19, only twice is a sign described as “great,” here in Revelation 12:1 and 13:13.

[257] Perhaps also Isaiah 11:1. (Emphasis mine).

[258] See Appendix 3.

[259] John 16:27, Galatians 4:27, Hebrews 6:7 and James 1:15.

[260] Emphasis mine.

[261] Emphasis mine.

[262] We can add Eve to the mix as well. She could not serve as a surrogate Queen Mother because she is not the immediate actual mother of the Messiah and since she is the mother of all the living (Genesis 3:20) she would be the “Queen Mother” of all of David’s children, not just his legitimate successors.

[263] Emphasis mine.

[264] There is a grammatical oddity in that here the neuter adjective *arsen* modifies the masculine *huion* suggests that the author purposefully wished to retain *arsen* so as to make an allusion to Isaiah 66:7.

[265] Victorinus, Commentary on the Apocalypse, 12, 1.

[266] Augustine, On Psalm 42.

[267] Bede, Explanation of Apocalypse, 2, 12, 1.

[268] Beatus, In Apocalypsin.

[269] This is explicitly stated by Bede when he wrote, “The Church, in a spiritual sense, both brings forth those with whom it travails...” (Explanation of the Apocalypse, 2, 12, 2).

[270] Emphasis mine.

[271] See The International Standard Version, Revelation 12:2.

[272] Emphasis mine. The Septuagint adds, “before the travail-pain came on, she escaped it and brought forth a male.”

[273] See John Damascene, Exposition of the Faith, 4, 14.

[274] *Basanizo* is used twelve times in the New Testament to describe a physical affliction (e.g. Matthew 8:6, Revelation 9:5); the affliction of God’s wrath (e.g. Revelation 14:10, 20:10) or the anticipation of God’s wrath (e.g. Matthew 8:29, Mark 5:7, Luke 8:28), waves buffeting a boat (Matthew 14:24), and the grief of the righteous (2 Peter 2:8). The Septuagint usage roughly corresponds to that of the New Testament.

[275] The male child is described, not a *brephos* (infant, young child), but more generically as a *teknon*, which can refer to a child of any age.

[276] It is my position that the childbirth in Revelation 12:5 refers primarily to the crucifixion and to the male child’s being “caught up” to God’s throne, as Christ’s Ascension into heaven. Both events may be conflated because both events involve Christ being lifted up and enthroned.

[277] Emphasis mine.

[278] Emphasis mine.

[279] Emphasis theirs.

[280] Hebrew, “*nephesh*,” Greek, “*e psyche mou*.”

[281] Cyril of Alexandria, Homily delivered at the end of the Council of Ephesus (431), (Homily 4, Migne, P.G., 77, 991).

[\[282\]](#) In some cases, especially concerning doctrines not solemnly defined by the Roman Catholic Church, Catholic theologians have proposed a number of opinions and may have differing ideas of the nature and extent of a given doctrine. Some of these facets are well-founded and based on sound theology; others, however, are speculative. We will concern ourselves only with where the doctrine coincides with the themes laid out in this book. Therefore, this is not an exhaustive treatment or explanation of any given doctrine. It is only a summary.

[\[283\]](#) Mary's being co-redemptrix and co-reparatrix is part of the common teaching of the Catholic Church. It is not a defined dogma, but various popes have given either direct or indirect support for these titles. Pius XI (1922-1939) and John Paul II (1978-2005) spoke of Mary as "co-redemptrix" in several public addresses, and Pius IX (1846-1878), Leo XIII (1878-1903), St. Pius X (1903-1914), and Benedict XV (1914-1922) used the term reparatrix in reference to Mary in some of their writings. Vatican II chose not to refer to Mary as co-redemptrix or reparatrix because it feared non-Catholics would have difficulty understanding these terms. Some scholars, though, believe *Lumen Gentium* chapter VIII provides support for these titles even if they are not explicitly used. Vatican II, though, makes it clear that any titles ascribed to Mary must be understood in such a way that they neither add nor take away "anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the one Mediator" (*Lumen Gentium*, 62).

[\[284\]](#) "It firmly believes, professes, and teaches that no one conceived of man and woman was ever freed of the domination of the Devil, except through the merit of the mediator between God and men, our Lord Jesus Christ; He who was conceived without sin, was born and died, through His death alone laid low the enemy of the human race by destroying our sins, and opened the entrance to the kingdom of heaven, which the first man by his own sin had lost with all succession..." Council of Florence, Decree Against the Jacobites, DS 1347.

[\[285\]](#) "Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men . . . flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it." "No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source" CCC 970 quoting Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) 60 and 62.

[\[286\]](#) The Immaculate Conception of Mary is a defined dogma of the Catholic Church, Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, DS 2800–2804.

[\[287\]](#) On December 8, 1854 Pope Pius IX defined promulgated the following teaching and definition in his Bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*: "...[B]y this divine prophecy [Genesis 3:15] the merciful Redeemer of mankind, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was clearly foretold: That his most Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, was prophetically indicated; and, at the same time, the very enmity of both against the evil one was significantly expressed. Hence, just as Christ, the Mediator between God and man, assumed human nature, blotted the handwriting of the decree that stood against us, and fastened it triumphantly to the cross, so the most holy Virgin, united with him by a most intimate and indissoluble bond, was, with him and through him, eternally at enmity with the evil serpent...[The] Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful." (cf. DS, 2804).

[\[288\]](#) Couldn't God have "won back" this demonic achievement simply by creating a fallen New Eve who believed the angel's message and came into right relationship with Him? If our redemption were simply the restoration of the natural happiness of Eden, He would have. But God willed something greater, that we would become a new creation in Christ and participate in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). For this reason, Christ did not come as another sinful Adam to "win back" Adam's fall, He came as a sinless New Adam to obey where Adam had not. Likewise, Mary is not just another Eve, but rather a New Eve to obey where Eve had not. A similar biblical and patristic

theme, that of Mary as Virgin in Body and Soul (see Appendix 4) lends support to this idea that God created Mary as a New Eve, that is as Eve was before the Fall.

[289] The perfect passive has a sense of permanence or fullness, as can be seen by one of the most frequently used words used in the passive perfect, "It is written" (Greek, *gegraptai*). This perfect passive is very powerful, having the sense of "it has been written, and it stands written." Mary has been graced by God and stands in His grace. Indeed, the angel addressed Mary as if "full of grace" or "highly favored" were her name, when he said, "Rejoice, *kecharitomene*, the Lord is with you."

[290] This is not a defined dogma, but it is considered a teaching proximate to Faith (*sententia fidei proxima*), that is to say, that it is a truth of revelation that has not been defined or promulgated by the Church (See Ludwig Ott's *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (St. Louise: B. Herder Books, 1957), pp. 9, 203.

[291] "This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect..." CCC 969

[292] The Assumption of Mary is a defined dogma of the Catholic Church. Pope Pius XII, May, 1 1946, "*Munificentissimus Deus*."

[293] There is an interesting correspondence between the Davidic King and the Queen Mother with Adam and Eve's exile from Paradise. God crowned Adam with glory and gave him and the Woman dominion over the Earth. After the fall, Adam was cast out, deported if you will, from Paradise. Just as the Queen Mother was also deported to Babylon with the King, the Woman likewise was "cast out" (deported) from paradise with Adam.

[294] As Andrew of Crete wrote, "Today He transports from her earthly dwelling, as Queen of the human race, His ever-Virgin Mother, from whose womb He, the living God, took on human form" (*Homilia II in Dormitionem Sanctissimae Deiparae*, Migne, P.G., 97, 1079B).

[295] Pseudo-Venantius Fortunatus (ca. 5th-6th century) writes that Mary is "...The perpetual Queen beside the King, her son" (*De laudibus Mariae*, Migne, P.L., 88, 282-283).

[296] "Hence the revered Mother of God, from all eternity joined in a hidden way with Jesus Christ in one and the same decree of predestination, immaculate in her conception, a most perfect virgin in her divine motherhood, the noble associate of the divine Redeemer who has won a complete triumph over sin and its consequences, finally obtained, as the supreme culmination of her privileges, that she should be preserved free from the corruption of the tomb and that, like her own Son, having overcome death, she might be taken up body and soul to the glory of heaven where, as Queen, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages...[T]he Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory" (*Munificentissimus Deus*, Pope Pius XII).

[297] Mother of God is a defined dogma of the Catholic Church. Council of Ephesus (AD 431), Canon 1, DS 252; Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), DS 301; Constantinople II (AD 553), Canon 6., DS 427, and Constantinople III (AD 680-681), DS 554-555.

[298] Consubstantial with the Father in His Divine nature and consubstantial with Mary in His human nature.

[299] Scripture repeatedly affirms that Mary is truly Jesus' Mother (Luke 1:43, John 2:1, 19:26). If Mary were not truly Christ's mother then Scripture ought to have refrained from calling her His mother.

[300] Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Ephesians, 18.

[301] "She is 'the mother of the members of Christ ... having cooperated by charity that faithful might be born in the Church, who are members of that Head.' Wherefore she is hailed as a preeminent and singular member of the Church, and as its type and excellent exemplar in faith and charity. The Catholic Church, taught by the Holy Spirit, honors her with filial affection and piety as a most beloved mother" (Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, Chapter 8, I, 53).

[302] Mary's intercession is part of the overall *de fide* teaching on the permissibility of asking the saints in heaven to pray for us, "...the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their prayers to God for men; and that it is good and useful to invoke them suppliantly and, in order to obtain favors from God through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who alone is our Redeemer and Savior..." DS 1821.

[303] Angels are God's messengers. The office of the elders (presbyters) is a priestly office since offering incense is a priestly duty (see, Exodus 30:6-9; Numbers 4:16, 16:4-10; Leviticus 16:12-13; 17:5, 11-12; 1 Samuel 2:28; 2

Chronicles 13:10-11; Luke 1:9-10). Incense can also be a metaphor for prayer (Psalms 141:2).

[\[304\]](#) *Vatican II, Lumen Gentium, Chapter 8, paragraph 62.*

[\[305\]](#) *St. Pius X, encyclical, Ad Diem Illum (1904), 24.*

[\[306\]](#) *The Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, chapter 8, paragraph 53.*

[\[307\]](#) *This is not to deny that there are many cases where some otherwise very good Catholics have over-exaggerated Marian affection to the point of abuse. One must fight the urge to correct the abuse of over-exaggerated piety with the opposite abuse neglecting or dismissing authentic Marian devotion. Christ is not honored by either extreme.*

[\[308\]](#) *When the Sub Tuum implores Mary to “rescue us from danger” it does not mean that Mary, somehow by her own autonomous power, will rescue us, but rather to offer our petitions to her Son, Jesus Christ, just as a pastor may be said to rescue his congregants by praying for them to God in times of danger.*

[\[309\]](#) *It would be very strange indeed if He “raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” in justification, but in heaven (when we are most truly raised up and seated with Him) we will be no longer “in Christ Jesus.” Certainly, what we receive provisionally in justification would come to its completion in glory.*

[\[310\]](#) *If the rich man in torment could be concerned about his brothers on earth (Luke 16:27-28), how much more Christ’s mother, whose will is perfectly ordered to her Son’s will, in heaven?*

[\[311\]](#) *Protestants sometimes make a distinction between positional sanctification and actual (or progressive) sanctification. Positional sanctification is understood as a state of holiness, a status, or special position of being set apart from the world. According to its proponents, positional sanctification never changes. Once positional sanctification takes place the Christian retains the status of being holy forever. Actual sanctification, however, is not a status, but a condition in the individual. Through God’s grace and good works a Christian either increases in actual holiness or that holiness is decreased through sin. The focus here is on actual, not positional, sanctification.*

[\[312\]](#) *Both positional and actual.*

[\[313\]](#) *It stands to reason. No one in heaven would still have attachment to sin. Otherwise, their heavenly bliss would be in competition with the desire to do something else contrary to God’s will.*

[\[314\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[315\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[316\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[317\]](#) *If in our weakness, the Holy Spirit comes to aid us to intercede according to God’s will through groaning (Romans 8:26-27), how much more will the Spirit intercede through those who were made perfect in heaven?*

[\[318\]](#) *Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, Section 60, CCC 970.*

[\[319\]](#) *As it is translated in the New King James Version, Holman Christian Standard Bible, the New Jerusalem Bible, and others.*

[\[320\]](#) *J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, A Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of Luke (Leiden: United Bible Societies, 1971), 444. (Emphasis theirs).*

[\[321\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[322\]](#) *Greek, hēmarton (third person plural, aorist, active, indicative).*

[\[323\]](#) *Catholicism calls these actual sins because they are brought about by a person’s will (see CCC 1868).*

[\[324\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[325\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[326\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[327\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[328\]](#) *The Council of Trent, Session 22, 3 (DS 1744), canon 5 (DS 1755), The Catechism of Trent, Question 70.*

[\[329\]](#) *“Queen of heaven” seems more certain.*

[\[330\]](#) *See Acts 1:3-4.*

[\[331\]](#) *Young’s Literal Translation.*

[\[332\]](#) *Emphasis mine.*

[\[333\]](#) *The original Hebrew and Greek has “brother” and “sister” in all the passages listed below. Depending on what translation is used, these words may have been translated to reflect their wider sense, so that instead of reading “brothers” or “sisters” the translation may read “relatives” or “nephew” or “cousin.”*

[\[334\]](#) *This is known as the Epiphanian view, since it was argued by the early Christian writer Epiphanius of Salamis. This view tends to be more accepted than by the Orthodox than by Catholics.*

[\[335\]](#) *The oldest known mention of Joseph in this fashion comes for the Proto-Evangelium of James that was composed sometime between AD 125-150 only a few decades removed from the completion of the New Testament. Although a non-canonical extra-scriptural work filled with fanciful pious stories, its close proximity to the time of Christ and its general favorable reception by the early church suggests that its broad and less embellished details may contain a grain of truth. Later, such early Christian writers as Leontius, Cyril, Epiphanius, and Euthymius all affirmed that Joseph was a widower.*

[\[336\]](#) *Jerome developed this view in his response to Helvidius, who denied Mary’s perpetual virginity based on his reading of Scripture. Although both Catholics and Orthodox affirm the perpetual virginity of Mary, Jerome’s view tends to be more accepted by Catholics than by the eastern Orthodox.*

[\[337\]](#) *Here I am indebted to Timothy Staples, who, in his CD set titled *The Gospel Truth about Mary*, gives a masterful presentation explaining the biblical rationale for Joseph’s marital chastity. My short summary here does not do justice to Mr. Staples’ work so I encourage all who are interested in this subject to pick up a copy of Timothy Staples’ work, *The Gospel Truth about Mary* CD set, from Catholic Answers in San Diego, California. The argument given above is on the second CD. The set can be obtained through the Catholic Answers’ website www.Catholic.com.*

[\[338\]](#) *Think of it this way. Anyone could enter Solomon’s temple while it was being built, but once God’s presence overshadowed and filled the Temple, it had been made holy and “set apart” for sacred use only. Only the priests and high priests could enter it. Even after the exile, when the Temple was rebuilt and God’s presence was no longer residing in it, the situation remained the same. Only the priest and high priest could enter because the Temple was sacred or “set apart.” The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary (Luke 1:35) and God “tabernacled” Himself in Mary’s womb (John 1:14). Mary’s womb, like the Temple, had been set apart for sacred use only. Even after Christ’s birth, it remained, like the second Temple, set apart.*

[\[339\]](#) *Commentary on Matthew 2:17.*

[\[340\]](#) *Commentary on Matthew 1:4.*

[\[341\]](#) *Discourses against the Arians 2:70.*

[\[342\]](#) *The Man Well-Anchored 120.*

[\[343\]](#) *Jerome, Against Helvidius: The Perpetual Virginity of Mary, 19. Emphasis mine.*

[344] Robert Jamieson et al., *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Hartford, Conn.: S. S. Scranton & Company), 1871. Jeremiah 31:22.

[345] Emphasis theirs.

[346] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 100, 5. Emphasis mine.

[347] The word translated “conceived” (Greek, *sullambano*) can mean “to become pregnant” (e.g., Luke 1:24, 31, 36, etc.).

[348] The word translated “brought forth” (Greek, *iktô*) can mean “to be in labor” or “to give birth” (e.g., Matthew 1:21, 23, 25, etc.).

[349] Justin’s use of reproductive terms to describe Eve’s sin mirrors James’ description of temptation, sin, and spiritual death. See James 1:14-15.

[350] The *Epistola Ad Diognetum* (ca. 125-300) presents a similar idea. Drawing its imagery from Genesis 3, the author described the things that please God as fruit:

...which the Serpent cannot reach, and to which deception does not approach [literally: “no deceit defiles by its contact”]; nor is Eve then corrupted [Greek *phtheiro*], but is trusted as a virgin... (*Epistola Ad Diognetum* 12, 8).

Eve’s corruption is due to the defilement of the Serpent’s deceit, while Christians are to be as “a virgin” who remains trustworthy (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:2-3).

[351] Eve conceives [*sullambano*] and Mary receives [*lambano*]. I do not wish to make too sharp of a distinction here, although there is a difference. The two words overlap in meaning. However, *sullambano* lends itself more often to conception both literally and metaphorically (cf. Luke 1:24, 31, 36, especially James 1:15), while *lambano* tends to have a more restricted meaning, namely “to receive” or “to seize something.”

[352] Ephrem of Syria, *Sermon 4* (*Sermones exegetici, opera omnia syriace et latine* (Rome, 1740), II, 327). Ephrem’s description of Eve and Mary as “simple” [Syriac, *pshy’wt’*] corresponds to Paul’s description of Eve in 2 Corinthians 11:3 (Emphasis mine).

[353] Ephrem of Syria, *Nisibene Hymns*, 27, 8 (*Carmina Nisibena*, nn. 26; ed. Gustav Bickel (Leipzig. 1866) 122-123).

[354] Ambrose of Milan, *Commentary on Psalm 118* (Emphasis mine).

[355] Gregory of Nazianzen, *Sermon 38*, 13; Migne, P.G., 36, 325B.

[356] Augustine, *On Holy Virginity*, 6.

[357] Theodotus of Ancyra *Homilia in Sanctam Deiparam et in Nativitatem Domini*, [Dub.], 11-12. The word translated “chose” is the Greek *prosecheirizeto*, which means literally “to take into one’s own hand” that is “to choose in advance” or “to ordain someone or something to a sacred purpose.”

[358] Latin, “...haec integra peperit Salvatorem.” Pseudo-Augustine, *De Symbolo, Sermo ad Catechumenos*, 4. Emphasis mine.

[359] John Damascene, *Orthodox Faith*, 4, 14.